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THE  
CAMBRIDGE AND SAYBROOK  
PLATFORMS  
OF  
CHURCH DISCIPLINE,

WITH THE  
CONFESSION OF FAITH  
OF THE NEW ENGLAND CHURCHES,

ADOPTED IN 1680 ;

AND THE  
HEADS OF AGREEMENT

ASSENTED TO BY THE PRESBYTERIANS AND CONGREGATIONALISTS  
IN ENGLAND IN 1690.

ILLUSTRATED WITH  
HISTORICAL PREFACES AND NOTES.

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1829.

*Marvin*



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## HISTORICAL PREFACE.

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IN the early settlement of this commonwealth, the clergy were called to bear their full proportion in the labors and responsibilities of government. In cases of difficulty or doubt, so many of them as could conveniently assemble were usually summoned by the courts or magistrates to give their opinion and advice. In addition to these smaller and more frequent assemblies, the whole body of the clergy, with their delegates, were in several instances convened, to determine questions of higher and more general importance. These larger meetings were denominated synods. The first of the kind recorded in our history was held, by order of the general court, in 1637, for determining the controversy occasioned by the adherents of the celebrated Mrs. Hutchinson. In 1642, and in 1644, the clergy of the commonwealth were called together, in the first instance to settle questions concerning the government, and in the second to reconcile differences between the deputies and magistrates. In 1643 there was a general meeting, for the purpose of correcting some of the churches, who were thought to favor the discipline of the Presbyterians.

It was in 1646, that measures were first taken for calling and constituting the synod at Cambridge, by which the Platform was proposed and adopted. To this time, the principal directory, next to the Bible, in the ecclesiastical affairs of the country, had been Mr. Cotton's Book of the Keys. But many "began to think it now high

time to draw up some platform of discipline and church government, which might be as a foundation for many generations to come. Especially was this judged to be very necessary, as the way wherein they had hitherto walked began to be called in question, whether it were of the right stamp, and agreeable to the pattern in the Mount. For this end, a bill was presented to the general court in 1646, for calling a synod to consider of the matter. The magistrates passed the bill," but owing to scruples among some of the deputies, the law did not take effect; and the proposed synod was called rather "by way of motion to the churches, than by express command."

When the time for the meeting of the synod drew near, the matter, says Gov. Winthrop, "was propounded to the churches. The order was sent to the churches within this jurisdiction; and to the churches in other jurisdictions," that is, in Plymouth and Connecticut, "a letter was sent withal." It was near winter, however, before the synod could convene, so that but few of the ministers invited from the other colonies were able to be present. On this account, the meeting continued but fourteen days, when it was adjourned to the 8th of June, 1647. At the time appointed, the synod came together, according to adjournment; but, owing to prevailing sickness and mortality, they were obliged to adjourn to the following year.

On the 15th of August, 1648, the synod again met according to adjournment. At the opening of the session, the Rev. Mr. Allen, first minister of Dedham, preached. "The synod now went on comfortably," and completed the work assigned them "in less than fourteen days." As to a confession of faith, instead of framing one themselves, "they wholly agreed with that which had then lately been set forth" by the assembly of divines at Westminster. The Platform of Discipline they drew,



says Gov. Winthrop, "according to the *general practice of the churches.*"

Of the names of the individuals composing this venerable synod, history does not particularly inform us. We know in the general that it consisted of the clergy of Massachusetts, with as many ministers as could be collected from the three other New England colonies; nearly all of whom were emigrants from England, and among the very first settlers of this country. Messrs. Hubbard and Higginson, who personally remembered them, describe them in the following terms: "They were men of great renown in the nation from whence the Laudian persecution exiled them. Their learning, their holiness, their gravity, struck all men that knew them with admiration. They were Timothies in their houses, Chrysostoms in their pulpits, and Augustines in their disputations." The most eminent among them were Messrs. Wilson and Cotton of Boston, Norton of Ipswich, Elliot of Roxbury, Shepard of Cambridge, Mather of Dorchester, Allen of Dedham, Rogers of Rowley, and Partridge of Duxbury. The excellent Mr. Hooker was not in their number, having in the year previous been called to his eternal rest. The composing or penning of the Platform has usually been attributed to the Rev. Richard Mather of Dorchester. When the business of the synod was finished, the session closed "with singing the song of Moses and the Lamb, recorded in the fifteenth chapter of the Revelation."

The Platform having been prepared and adopted in the synod, was next "to be presented to the churches, and to the general government, for their consideration and acceptance in the Lord. This was done in October, 1648. Some objections were made against some part thereof, by some of the deputies of the court, in the name of the churches and freemen they belonged unto, which being answered by some of the elders, to whom it was

left against the next sessions of the court, *they then thankfully accepted thereof, and declared their approbation of the said Platform of Discipline, as being, for the substance thereof, what they had hitherto practised in their churches, and did believe to be according to the word of God.*"

The Platform thus received, in Massachusetts, the sanction of law. Indeed it was adopted and in force in all the New England colonies, until superseded in Connecticut by the Saybrook Platform in 1708. Dr. Trumbull, speaking of the Cambridge Platform, says, "This, with the ecclesiastical laws, formed the *religious constitution* of the colonies."

The following quotations will show the estimation in which the Platform was held, in the years directly following its adoption.

Rev. Mr. Norton, in his election sermon, preached May 22, 1661, says, "Take care that the order of the gospel may have a free passage in the churches; I mean that our practice may effectually answer our doctrine, in that book entitled, the Platform of Church Discipline."

And in his last sermon, preached April 2, 1663, he further says, "Remember that we have the pattern in the mount, I mean we have the scripture as a rule, and you have the Platform of Church Discipline given to you in way of counsel, as the confession of our faith to this way of church government: you know in what manner it was that which, for the substance of it, owns the cause congregational: if any are departed from it let them look to it."

Rev. Urian Oakes, President of Harvard College, in his election sermon preached May 7, 1673, declares himself as follows, "I beg that we may keep the king's highway, the way that Christ himself hath cast up for us, and that our worthy predecessors have travelled in before us, the way that hath been stated, not in the private models

of some fanciful and conceited men, but in the *Platform of Church Discipline*; the truest understanding of these things is from the Platform deduced out of the word of God."

At a synod holden in Boston, September 10, 1679, of which the Rev. Increase Mather was moderator, "it was put to vote, whether the assembly did approve of *The Platform of Church Discipline*? And both elders and brethren did unanimously lift up their hands in the affirmative, not one appearing when the vote was propounded, in the negative, but it jointly passed in these words, 'A synod of the churches in the province of the Massachusetts, being called by the honored General Court to convene at Boston, the 10th of September, 1679, having read and considered *the Platform of Church Discipline*, agreed upon by the synod assembled at Cambridge, 1648, do unanimously approve of the said Platform, for the substance of it, desiring that the churches may continue stedfast in *the order of the gospel*, according to what is therein declared from the word of God.'"

This synod held a second session, May 12, 1680, for the purpose of considering and adopting a confession of faith. Whereupon it was "unanimously agreed that a confession of faith, according to that which was drawn up by the ministers and messengers of the Congregational churches who met at the Savoy in London (being for the most part the same with the Westminster confession) should be compiled—which, being publicly read and examined, was approved and adopted." This confession is printed in the latter part of the present volume. The reason why our fathers preferred to adopt, in the former instance the Westminster confession, and now for substance the Savoy confession, rather than prepare a separate formula for themselves, was, as they inform us, that by agreeing in the very "words of those reverend assem-

blies, they might with *one mouth* as well as heart, glorify God and our Lord Jesus Christ."

At a general court held at Boston, May 19, 1680, the result of the synod, then just closed, was presented for acceptance. Whereupon the following order was passed: "This Court having taken into serious consideration the request that hath been presented by several of the reverend elders, in the name of the late synod, do approve thereof, and accordingly order, the Confession of Faith, agreed upon at their second session, and the Platform of Discipline, consented unto by the synod at Cambridge, anno 1648, to be printed for the benefit of the churches in present and after times."

From writers who have flourished since the synod of 1680, numerous quotations might be given, expressing their high estimation of the Cambridge Platform. Near the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Rev. Mr. Wise of Ipswich, published a work, the professed object of which was to vindicate the Platform, and urge its observance. The Rev. Cotton Mather, speaking of the Platform, says, "the churches have cheerfully embraced it, practised it, and been prospered in it, unto this very day."

The following quotation is from a joint letter of Rev. John Higginson\* and Rev. William Hubbard,† written by them at a very advanced period of life, in which they tell us that they *had seen* "the persons who from four famous colonies assembled in the synod, that agreed on our Platform of Church Discipline."

"We do earnestly testify," say they, "that if any who are given to change do rise up to unhinge the *well established churches* in this land, it will be the duty and interest of the churches to examine whether the *men of this trespass* are more prayerful, more watchful, more zealous, more patient, more heavenly, more universally conscien-

\* Son of the first minister of Salem.

† The historian of Ipswich.

tious, and harder students, and better scholars, and more willing to be informed and advised than those great and good men who left unto the churches what they now enjoy ; if they be not so, it will be wisdom for the children to forbear pulling down with their own hands the houses of God, which were built by their wiser fathers, until they have better satisfaction.

“ It is not yet forgot by some surviving ear-witnesses of it, that when the *synod* had finished the *Platform of Church Discipline*, they did with an extraordinary elevation of soul and voice then sing together *the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb*, in the fifteenth chapter of the Revelation : God forbid, that in the loss of that holy discipline, there should be hereafter occasion to sing about breaking down the carved work of the houses of God with axes and hammers ; or take up the eightieth Psalm for our lamentations.

“ Concerning all sinful attempts to overturn the order of the gospel hitherto upheld in the churches of New England, and to spoil that glorious work of God, which we have seen him doing, with a series of remarkable providences, in erecting such congregational churches in these ends of the earth ; we would now therefore bear our testimony that they are doubtless displeasing to our Lord Jesus Christ, who walks in the midst of these golden candlesticks, and they will prove bitterness in the latter end.

“ And this we declare with the more concern upon our minds because of an observation, so plain, that he that runs may read it.

“ It is too observable that the power of godliness is exceedingly decaying and expiring in the country ; and one great point in the decay of the power of godliness, is men’s growing weary of the congregational church discipline, which is evidently calculated to maintain it.

“If that church discipline were more thoroughly and vigorously kept alive, even by those that make profession of it, it might be hoped, that the Lord would sanctify it, for the revival of all godliness in the land.

“But if this church discipline come to be given up, we think it our duty to leave this warning with the churches, that probably the apostacy will not stop there; for the same spirit that will dispose the next generation to change their way in one point, will dispose them to more and more changes (even in doctrine and worship as well as in manners) until it may be feared, the candlestick will quickly be removed out of its place.”\*

The Cambridge Platform never has been superseded or formally annulled in Massachusetts; though by the gradual introduction of laws and usages, in a period of almost two hundred years, several of its requisitions have come to be no longer observed. Still, in many of its parts, it is of distinguished excellence and of high authority; it is an instrument to which reference is often made; and as a monument of the ecclesiastical order of our venerated fathers, it is exceedingly valuable.

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\* A remarkable prediction—and, in regard to not a few of the original churches in Massachusetts, too plainly and sadly accomplished.



## ORIGINAL PREFACE.

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THE setting forth of the public confession of the faith of churches hath a double end, and both tending to public edification : First, the maintenance of the faith intire within itself : Secondly, the holding forth of unity and harmony, both amongst and with other churches. Our churches here, as, by the grace of Christ, we believe and profess the same doctrine of the truth of the gospel, which generally is received in all the reformed churches of Christ in Europe, so especially we desire not to vary from the doctrine of faith and truth held forth by the churches of our native country. For though it be not one native country that can breed us all of one mind ; nor ought we to have the glorious faith of our Lord Jesus with respect to persons, yet as Paul, who was himself a Jew, professed to hold forth the doctrine of justification by faith, and of the resurrection of the dead, according as he knew his godly countrymen did, who were Jews by nature, (Gal. ii. 15, Acts xxvi. 6, 7, ) so we who are by nature Englishmen, do desire to hold forth the same doctrine of religion, especially in fundamentals, which we see and know to be held by the churches of England, according to the truth of the gospel.

The more we discern (that which we do, and have cause to do with incessant mourning and trembling) the unkind, and unbrotherly, and unchristian contentions of our godly brethren and countrymen, in matters of church government, the more earnestly do we desire to see them join together in one common faith, and ourselves with them. For this end, having perused the public confession of the faith, agreed upon by the reverend assembly of divines at Westminster, and finding the sum and substance thereof, in matters of doctrine, to express not their own judgment only, but ours also ; and being likewise called upon by our godly magistrates, to draw up a public

confession of that faith which is constantly taught, and generally professed amongst us ; we thought good to present unto them, and with them to our churches, and with them to all the churches of Christ abroad, our professed and hearty assent and attestation to the whole confession of faith (for substance of doctrine) which the reverend assembly presented to the religious and honourable parliament of England :\* excepting only some sections in the 25, 30, and 31, chapters of their confession, which concern points of controversy in church discipline ; touching which, we refer ourselves to the draught of church discipline in the ensuing treatise.

The truth of what we here declare, may appear by the unanimous vote of the synod of the Elders and Messengers of our churches, assembled at Cambridge, the last of the sixth month, 1648, which jointly passed in these words : This synod having perused and considered, with much gladness of heart and thankfulness to God, the confession of faith, published of late by the reverend assembly in England, do judge it to be very holy, orthodox, and judicious in all matters of faith ; and do therefore freely and fully consent thereunto, for the substance thereof. Only in those things which have respect to church government and discipline, we refer ourselves to the Platform of Church Discipline, agreed upon by this present assembly ; and do therefore think it meet, that this confession of faith should be commended to the churches of Christ amongst us, and to the honoured court, as worthy of their due consideration and acceptance. Howbeit, we may not conceal, that the doctrine of *vocation*, expressed in chap. x. sect. 1, and summarily repeated in chap. xiii. sect. 1, passed not without some debate. Yet considering that the term of *vocation*, and others by which it is described, are capable of a large, or more strict sense and use, and that it is not intended to bind apprehensions precisely in point of order or method, there hath been a general condescendency thereunto.

Now by this our professed consent and free concurrence with them in all the doctrinals of religion, we hope

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\* Our fathers, it seems, received the Westminster Confession of Faith, much as evangelical christians profess to receive it now ; not agreeing to every sentence and word, but "for *substance of doctrine*," expressing their assent to it.—*Editor*.



it may appear to the world, that as we are a remnant of the people of the same nation with them, so we are professors of the same common faith, and fellow-heirs of the same common salvation. Yea moreover, as this our profession of the same faith with them, will exempt us, even in their judgments, from suspicion of heresy; so, we trust, it may exempt us in the like sort from suspicion of *schism*; that though we are forced to dissent from them in matters of church discipline, yet our dissent is not taken up out of arrogancy of spirit in ourselves, whom, they see, willingly condescend to learn of them; neither is it carried with uncharitable censoriousness towards them, (both which are the proper and essential characters of *schism*,) but in meekness of wisdom, as we walk along with them, and follow them as they follow Christ; so where we conceive a different apprehension of the mind of Christ; as it falleth out in some few points touching church-order, we still reserve due reverence to them whom we judge to be, through Christ, the glorious lights of both nations, and only crave leave, as in the spirit we are bound, to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, and, after the apostles example, as we believe, so we speak.

And if the example of such poor outcasts as ourselves might prevail, if not with all (for that were too great a blessing to hope for) yet with some or other of our brethren in England, so far as they are come to mind and speak the same thing with such as dissent from them, we hope in Christ it would not only moderate the harsh judging and condemning of one another in such differences of judgment as may be found in the choicest saints; but also prevent, by the mercy of Christ, the peril of the distraction and destruction of all the churches in both kingdoms. Otherwise, if brethren shall go on to bite and devour one another, the apostle feared, as we also with sadness of heart do, it will tend to the consuming of them, and us all; which the Lord prevent.

We are not ignorant, that, besides these aspersions of *heresy* and *schism*, other exceptions also are taken at our way of church government, but, as we conceive, upon as little ground. As,

1. That by admitting none into the fellowship of our church but saints by calling, we rob many parish churches

of their best members, to make up one of our congregations, which is not only to gather churches out of churches, a thing unheard of in scripture, but also to weaken the hearts and hands of the best ministers in the parishes, by despoiling them of their best hearers.

2. That we provide no course for the gaining, and calling in of ignorant, and erroneous, and scandalous persons, whom we refuse to receive into our churches, and so exclude from the wholesome remedy of church discipline.

3. That in our way, we sow seeds of division, and hindrance of edification in every family; whilst admitting into our churches only voluntaries, the husband will be of one church, the wife of another; the parents of one church, the children of another; the master of one church, the servants of another. And so the parents and masters being of different churches from their children and servants, they cannot take a just account of their profiting by what they hear: yea, by this means the husbands, parents, and masters, shall be chargeable to the maintenance of many other churches and church officers, besides their own; which will prove a charge and burthen unsupportable.

But for answer, as to the first; for gathering churches out of churches, we cannot say that it is a thing unheard of in scripture. The first Christian church was gathered out of the Jewish church, and out of many synagogues in that church, and consisted partly of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, partly of the Galileans; who though they kept some communion in some parts of public worship with the temple, yet neither did they frequent the sacrifices, nor repair to the sanhedrim for the determining of their church-causes, but kept intire and constant communion with the apostle's church in all the ordinances of the gospel. And for the first Christian church of the Gentiles at Antioch, it appeareth to have been gathered and constituted partly of the dispersed brethren of the church at Jerusalem, whereof some were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, and partly of the believing Gentiles. Acts xi. 20, 21.

If it be said, the first Christian church at Jerusalem, and that at Antioch, were gathered not out of any Christian church, but out of the Jewish temple and synagogues, which were shortly after to be abolished, and their gathering to

Antioch, was upon occasion of dispersion in time of persecution.

We desire it may be considered, 1. That the members of the Jewish church were more strongly and straitly tied by express holy covenant, to keep fellowship with the Jewish church till it was abolished, than any members of Christian parish churches are wont to be tied to keep fellowship with their parish churches. The episcopal canons, which bind them to attend on their parish church, it is likely they are now abolished with the episcopacy.\* The common law of the land is satisfied, as we conceive, if they attend upon the worship of God in any other church, though not within their own parish. But no such like covenant of God, nor any other religious tie lieth upon them to attend the worship of God in their own parish church, as did lie upon the Jews to attend upon the worship of God in their temple and synagogues.

2. Though the Jewish temple-church at Jerusalem was to be abolished, yet that doth not make the desertion of it by the members to be lawful, till it was abolished. Future abolition is no warrant for present desertion, unless it be lawful, in some case, whilst the church is yet in present standing, to desert it; to wit, either for avoiding present pollutions, or for hope of greater edification, and so for better satisfaction to conscience in either. Future events, or foresight of them, do not dissolve present relations, else wives, children, servants, might desert their husbands, parents, masters, when they be mortally sick.

3. What the members of the Jewish church did, in joining to the church at Antioch in time of persecution, it may well be conceived the members of any Christian church may do the like for satisfaction of conscience. Peace of conscience is more desirable than the peace of the outward man; and freedom from scruples of conscience is more comfortable to a sincere heart, than freedom from persecution.

If it be said, those members of the Christian church at Jerusalem that joined to the church at Antioch, removed their habitations together with their relations; which if the brethren of the congregational way would do, it would

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\* Episcopacy was at this time abolished in England, and Presbyterianism was the predominant religion. Charles I. was beheaded in January of this year.—*Ed.*

much abate the grievance of their departure from their presbyterial churches.

We verily could wish them so to do, as well approving the like removal of habitation, in case of changing church relations, provided that it may be done without too much detriment to their outward estates, and we for our parts have done the same. But to put a necessity of removal of habitation in such a case, it is to foment and cherish a corrupt principle of making civil cohabitation, if not a formal cause, yet at least a proper adjunct of church relation, which the truth of the gospel doth not acknowledge. Now to foment an error to the prejudice of the truth of the gospel, is not to walk with a right foot, according to the truth of the gospel, as Paul judgeth, Gal. ii. 14.

4. We do not think it meet or safe, for a member of a presbyterial church forthwith to desert his relation to his church, betake himself to the fellowship of a congregational church, though he may discern some defect in the estate or government of his own. For,

1. Faithfulness of brotherly love in church relation, requireth that the members of the church should first convince their brethren of their sinful defects, and duly wait for their reformation, before they depart from them. For if we must take such a course for the healing of a private brother, in a way of brotherly love, with much meekness and patience; how much more ought we so to walk with like tenderness toward an whole church.

Again, 2. By the hasty departure of sound members from a defective church, reformation is not promoted, but many times retarded, and corruption increased. Whereas on the contrary, while sincere members breathing after purity of reformation abide together, they may, by the blessing of God upon their faithful endeavours, prevail much with their elders and neighbours towards a reformation, it may be, so much as that their elders in their own church shall receive none to the seals but visible saints; and in the classis shall put forth no authoritative act, but consultative only, touching the members of other churches, not touching their own, but with the consent (silent consent at least) of their own church: Which two things, if they can obtain with any humble, meek, holy, faithful endeavours, we conceive they might, by the grace of Christ,

find liberty of conscience to continue their relation with their own presbyterial church without scruple.

5. But to add a word further, touching the gathering of churches out of churches : what if there were no express example of such a thing extant in the scriptures ? That which we are wont to answer the antipædo-baptists, may suffice here ; it is enough, if any evidence thereof may be gathered from just consequence of scripture light. Dr. Ames's judgment concerning this case passeth, for ought we know, without exception, which he gave in his fourth book of conscience, in answer to two questions, chap. xiv. num. 16. " If any," saith he, " wronged with unjust vexation, or providing for his own edification, or in testimony against sin, depart from a church, where some evils are tolerated, and join himself to another more pure, yet without condemning of the church he leaveth, he is not therefore to be held as a schismatic, or as guilty of any other sin."

Where the tripartite disjunction, which the judicious doctor putteth, declareth the lawfulness of the departure of a church member from his church, when either through weariness of unjust vexation, or in way of provision for his own edification, or in testimony against sin, he joineth himself to another congregation more reformed : any one of these, he judgeth a lawful departure, though all of them do not concur together. Neither will such a practice despoil the best ministers of the parishes of their best hearers. For,

1. Sometimes the ministers themselves are willing to join with their better sort of hearers in this way of reformation, and then they and their hearers continue still their church relation together ; yea, and confirm it more straitly and strongly, by an express renewed covenant, though the ministers may still continue their wonted preaching to the whole parish.

2. If the ministers do dislike the way of those whom they otherwise count their best members, and so refuse to join with them therein ; yet if those members can procure some other ministers to join with them in their own way, and still continue their dwelling together in the same town, they may easily order the times of the public assembly, as to attend constantly upon the ministry of their



former church; and either after or before the public assembly of the parish, take an opportunity to gather together for the administration of the sacraments and censures, and other church ordinances amongst themselves. The first apostolic church assembled to hear the word with the Jewish church in the open courts of the temple; but afterwards gathered together for breaking of bread, and other acts of church order, from house to house.

3. Suppose presbyterial churches should communicate some of their best gifted members towards the erecting and gathering of another church, it would not forthwith be their detriment, but may be their enlargement. It is the most noble and perfect work of a living creature, both in nature and grace, to propagate and multiply his kind; and it is the honour of the faithful spouse of Christ to set forward the work of Christ, as well abroad as at home. The church in Cant. viii. 8, to help forward her little sister church, was willing to part with her choice materials, even beams of cedar, and such precious living stones as were fit to build a silver palace. In the same book, the church is sometimes compared to a garden, sometimes to an orchard, Cant. iv. 12, 13. No man planteth a garden or orchard, but seeketh to get the choicest herbs and plants of his neighbours, and they freely impart them: nor do they count it a spoil to their garden and orchard, but rather a glory. Nevertheless, we go not so far, we neither seek nor ask the choice members of the parishes, but accept them being offered.

If it be said, they are not offered by the ministers, nor by the parish churches, who have most right in them, but only by themselves:

It may justly be demanded, what right or what power have either the ministers or parish church over them? Not by solemn church covenant, for that, though it be the firmest engagement, is not owned, but rejected. If it be by their joining with the parish in calling and election of a minister to such a congregation at his first coming, there is indeed just weight in such an engagement; nor do we judge it safe for such to remove from such a minister, unless it be upon such grounds as may justly give him due satisfaction. But if the union of such members to a parish church, and to the ministry thereof, be only

by cohabitation within the precincts of the parish, that union, as it was founded upon human law, so by human law it may easily be released. Or otherwise, if a man remove his habitation, he removeth also the bond of his relation, and the ground of offence.

4. It need not be feared, that all the best hearers of the best ministers, no, nor the most of them, will depart from them upon point of church government. Those who have found the presence and power of the spirit of Christ breathing in their ministers, either to their conversion or edification, will be slow to change such a ministry of faith and holiness, for the liberty of church order. Upon which ground, and sundry other such like, there be doubtless sundry godly and judicious hearers in many parishes in England, that do and will prefer their relation to their ministers, though in a presbyterial way, above the congregational confederation.

5. But if all, or the most part of the best hearers of the best ministers of the parishes should depart from them, as preferring in their judgments the congregational way; yet in case the congregational way should prove to be of Christ, it will never grieve the holy hearts of godly ministers, that their hearers should follow Christ: yea many of themselves, upon due deliberation, will be ready to go along with them. It never grieved nor troubled John Baptist, that his disciples departed from him to follow after Christ, John iii. But if the congregational way should prove to be, not the institution of Christ, as we take it, but the invention of men; then doubtless the presbyterial form, if it be of God, will swallow up the other, as Moses's rod devoured the rods of the Egyptians. Nor will this put a necessity upon both the opposite parties to shift for themselves, and to seek to supplant one another, but only it will call upon them (*aletheuein en agape*) to seek and to follow the truth in love, to attend in faithfulness each unto his own flock, and to administer to them all the holy things of God, and their portion of food in due season: and as for others, quietly to forbear them, and yet to instruct them with meekness that are contrary minded, leaving it to Christ, in the use of all good means, to reveal his own truth in his own time, and meanwhile endeavouring to

keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Phil. iii. 15, 16. Eph. iv. 3.

To the second exception, that we take no course for the gaining, and healing, and calling in of ignorant and erroneous persons, whom we refuse to receive into our churches, and so exclude them from the remedy of church discipline.

We conceive the receiving of them into our churches, would rather lose and corrupt our churches, than gain and heal them. A little leaven laid in a lump of dough, will sooner leaven the whole lump, than the whole lump will sweeten it. We find it therefore safer to square rough and unhewn stones before they be laid into the building, rather than to hammer and hew them when they lie unevenly in the building. And accordingly two means we use to gain and call in such as are ignorant and scandalous.

1. The public ministry of the word, upon which they are invited by counsel, and required by wholesome laws. And the word it is, which is the power of God to salvation, to the calling and winning of souls.

2. Private conference, and conviction by the elders, and other able brethren of the church, whom they do the more respectfully hearken unto, when they see no hope of enjoying church fellowship, or participation in the sacraments for themselves or their children, till they approve their judgments to be sound and orthodox, and their lives subdued to some hope of a godly conversation. What can classical discipline, or excommunication itself do more in this case?

The third exception wraps up in it a threefold domestic inconvenience, and each of them meet to be eschewed.

1. Disunion in families between each relation.
2. Disappointment of edification, for want of opportunity in the governors of families to take account of things heard by their children and servants.
3. Disbursements of chargeable maintenance to the several churches, whereto the several persons of their families are joined.

All which inconveniences either do not fall out in congregational churches, or are easily redressed; for none are orderly admitted into congregational churches, but



such as are well approved by good testimony to be duly observant of family relation: or if any otherwise disposed should creep in, they are either orderly healed, or duly removed in a way of Christ. Nor are they admitted, unless they can give some good account of their profiting by ordinances, before the elders and brethren of the church, and much more to their parents and masters. Godly tutors in the university can take an account of their pupils; and godly householders in the city take an account of their children and servants, how they profit by the word they have heard in several churches, and that to the greater edification of the whole family by the variety of such administrations. Bees may bring more honey and wax into the hive, when they are not limited to one garden of flowers, but may fly abroad to many.

Nor is any charge expected from wives, children or servants to the maintenance of congregational churches, further than they be furnished with personal estates or livings, which may enable them to contribute of such things as they have, and not of such things as they have not. God accepteth not robbery for a sacrifice. And though a godly householder may justly take himself bound in conscience to contribute to any such church, whereto his wife, or children, or servants do stand in relation, yet that will not aggravate the burden of his charge, no more than if they were received members of the same church whereto himself is related.

But why do we stand thus long to plead exemptions from exceptions? The Lord help all his faithful servants, whether presbyterial or congregational, to judge and shame ourselves before the Lord, for all our former compliances to greater enormities in church government, than are to be found either in the congregational or presbyterial way; and then surely either the Lord will clear up his own will to us, and so frame and subdue us all to one mind and one way, (Ezek. xliii. 10, 11,) or else we shall learn to bear one another's burthens in a spirit of meekness. It will then doubtless be far from us, so to attest the discipline of Christ, as to detest the disciples of Christ: so to contend for the seamless coat of Christ, as to crucify

the living members of Christ : so to divide ourselves about church communion, as through breaches to open a wide gap for a deluge of antichristian and profane malignity to swallow up both church and civil state.

What shall we say more ? Is difference of church order become the inlet of all the disorders in the kingdom ? Hath the Lord indeed left us to such hardness of heart, that church government shall become a snare to Zion, as sometimes Moses was to Egypt, *Exod. x. 7*, that we cannot leave contesting and contending about it, till the kingdom be destroyed ? Did not the Lord Jesus, when he dedicated his sufferings for his church, and his also unto his Father, make it his earnest and only prayer for us in this world, that we all might be one in him ? *John xvii. 20, 21, 22, 23*. And is it possible that he, whom the Father heard always, *John xi. 42*, should not have this last most solemn prayer heard and granted ? Or shall it be granted for all the saints elsewhere, and not for the saints in England ; so that amongst them disunion shall grow even about church union and communion ? If it be possible for a little faith, so much as a grain of mustard seed, to remove a mountain, is it not possible for so much strength of faith as is to be found in all the godly in the kingdom, to remove those images of jealousy, and to cast those stumbling-blocks out of the way, which may hinder the free passage of brotherly love amongst brethren ? It is true indeed, the national covenant doth justly engage both parties faithfully to endeavour the utter extirpation of the antichristian hierarchy ; and much more of all blasphemies, heresies, and errors. Certainly, if congregational discipline be independent from the inventions of men, is it not much more independent from the delusions of Satan ? What fellowship hath Christ with Belial ? Light with darkness ? Truth with error ? The faithful Jews needed not the help of the Samaritans to re-edify the temple of God ; yea, they rejected their help when it was offered, *Ezra iv. 1, 2, 3*. And if the congregational way be a way of truth, as we believe, and if the brethren that walk in it be zealous of the truth, and hate every false way, as by the rule of their holy discipline they are instructed, *2 John, 10, 11*, then verily there is no

branch in the national covenant, that engageth the covenanters to abhor either the congregational churches, or their way : which being duly administered, do no less effectually extirpate the antichristian hierarchy, and all blasphemies, heresies, and pernicious errors, than the other way of discipline doth, which is more generally and publicly received and ratified.

But the Lord Jesus commune with all our hearts in secret ; and he who is the king of his church, let him be pleased to exercise his kingly power in our spirits, that so his kingdom may come into our churches in purity and peace. Amen.

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## PLATFORM.

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### CHAP. I.

Of the form of church government; and that it is one, immutable, and prescribed in the word.

1. ECCLESIASTICAL polity, or church government or discipline, is nothing else but that form and order that is to be observed in the church of Christ upon earth, both for the constitution of it, and all the administrations that therein are to be performed.

Ezek. xliii. 11. Col. ii. 5. 1 Tim. iii. 15.

2. Church government is considered in a double respect, either in regard of the parts of government themselves, or necessary circumstances thereof. The parts of government are prescribed in the word, because the Lord Jesus Christ, the king and lawgiver of his church, is no less faithful in the house of God than was Moses, who from the Lord delivered a form and pattern of government to the children of Israel in the Old Testament: and the holy scriptures are now also so perfect, as they are able to make the man of God perfect, and thoroughly furnished unto every good work; and therefore doubtless to the well ordering of the house of God.

Heb. iii. 5, 6. Exod. xxv. 40. 2 Tim. iii. 16.

3. The parts of church government are all of them exactly described in the word of God, being parts or means of instituted worship, according to the second commandment, and therefore to continue one and the

same unto the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, as a kingdom that cannot be shaken, until he shall deliver it up unto God, even to the Father. So that it is not left in the power of men, officers, churches, or any state in the world to add, or diminish, or alter any thing in the least measure therein.

\* 1 Tim. iii. 15. 1 Chron. xv. 13. Ex. xx. 4. 1 Tim. vi. 13, 16. Heb. xii. 27, 28. 1 Cor. xv. 24. Deut. xii. 32. Ezek. xliii. 8. 1 Kings, xii. 31—33.

4. The necessary circumstances, as time and place, &c. belonging unto order and decency, are not so left unto men, as that under pretence of them they may thrust their own inventions upon the churches, being circumscribed in the word with many general limitations, where they are determined in respect of the matter, to be neither worship itself, nor circumstances separable from worship. In respect of their end, they must be done unto edification. In respect of the manner, decently and in order, according to the nature of the things themselves, and civil and church custom. Doth not even nature itself teach you? Yea, they are in some sort determined particularly, namely, that they be done in such a manner, as, all circumstances considered, is most expedient for edification: so, as if there be no error of man concerning their determination, the determining of them is to be accounted as if it were divine.

2 Kings, xii. Ex. xx. 19. Isa. xxviii. 13. Col. i. 22, 23. Acts, xv. 28. Matt. xv. 9. 1 Cor. xi. 23, and viii. 34. 1 Cor. xiv. 26, and xiv. 40, and xi. 14, 15, and xiv. 12, 19. Acts, xv. 28.

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## CHAP. II.

Of the nature of the catholic church in general, and in special of a particular visible church.

1. THE catholic church is the whole company of those that are elected, redeemed, and in time effectually called from the state of sin and death, unto a state of grace and salvation in Jesus Christ.

Eph. i. 22, 23, and v. 25, 26, 30. Heb. xii. 23.

2. This church is either triumphant, or militant. Triumphant, the number of them who are glorified in heaven : militant, the number of them who are conflicting with their enemies upon earth.

Rom. viii. 17. 2 Tim. ii. 12, and iv. 8. Eph. vi. 12, 13.

3. This militant church is to be considered as invisible, and visible. Invisible, in respect of their relation wherein they stand to Christ, as a body unto the head, being united unto him by the Spirit of God, and faith in their hearts. Visible, in respect of the profession of their faith, in their persons, and in particular churches. And so there may be acknowledged an universal visible church.

2 Tim. ii. 19. Rev. ii. 17. 1 Cor. vi. 17. Eph. iii. 17. Rom. i. 8. 1 Thess. i. 8. Isa. ii. 2. 1 Tim. vi. 12.

4. The members of the militant visible church, considered either as not yet in church order, or walking according to the church order of the gospel. In order, and so besides the spiritual union and communion common to all believers, they enjoy moreover an union and communion ecclesiastical-political. So we deny an universal visible church.

Acts xix. 1. Col. ii. 5. Matt. xviii. 17. 1 Cor. v. 12.

5. The state of the members of the militant visible church walking in order, was either before the law, economical, that is in families ; or under the law, national ; or since the coming of Christ, only congregational. The term independent we approve not. Therefore neither national, provincial nor classical.

Gen. xviii. 19. Exod. xix. 6.

6. A congregational church is by the institution of Christ a part of the militant visible church, consisting of a company of saints by calling, united into one body by an holy covenant, for the public worship of God, and the mutual edification one of another, in the fellowship of the Lord Jesus.

1 Cor. xiv. 23, 36, and i. 2, and xii. 27. Exod. xix. 5, 6. Deut. xxix. 1, and 9 to 15. Acts. ii. 42. 1 Cor. xiv. 26.



## CHAP. III.

Of the matter of the visible church, both in respect of quality and quantity.

1. THE matter of a visible church are saints by calling.

1 Cor. i. 2. Eph. i. 1.

2. By saints, we understand, 1. Such as have not only attained the knowledge of the principles of religion, and are free from gross and open scandals, but also do together with the profession of their faith and repentance, walk in blameless obedience to the word, so as that in charitable discretion they may be accounted saints by calling, though perhaps some or more of them be unsound, and hypocrites inwardly, because the members of such particular churches are commonly by the Holy Ghost called saints and faithful brethren in Christ; and sundry churches have been reprov'd for receiving, and suffering such persons to continue in fellowship amongst them, as have been offensive and scandalous; the name of God also by this means is blasphemed, and the holy things of God defiled and profaned, the hearts of the godly grieved, and the wicked themselves hardened, and helped forward to damnation. The example of such doth endanger the sanctity of others: a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. 2. The children of such, who are also holy.

Heb. vi. 1. 1 Cor. i. 5. Rom. xv. 14. Ps. l. 16, 17. Acts, viii. 37. Mat iii. 6. Rom. vi. 17. 1 Cor. i. 2. Phil. i. 2. Col. i. 2. Eph. i. 1. 1 Cor. v. 12, 13. Rev. ii. 14, 15, 20. Ezek. xlv. 7, 9, and xxiii. 33, 39. Num. xix. 20. Hag. ii. 13, 14. 1 Cor. xi. 27, 29. Psal. xxxvii. 21. 1 Cor. v. 6. 2 Cor. vii. 14.

3. The members of churches, though orderly constituted, may in time degenerate, and grow corrupt and scandalous, which though they ought not to be tolerated in the church, yet their continuance therein, through the defect of the execution of discipline and just censures, doth not immediately dissolve the being of a church, as appears in the church of Israel, and the



churches of Galatia and Corinth, Pergamus and Thyatira.

Jer. ii. 21. 1 Cor. v. 12. Jer. ii. 4. Gal. v. 4. 2 Cor. xii. 21. Rev. ii. 14, 15, and xxi. 21.

4. The matter of the church in respect of its quantity, ought not to be of greater number than may ordinarily meet together conveniently in one place; nor ordinarily fewer, than may conveniently carry on church work. Hence when the holy scripture makes mention of the saints combined into a church estate, in a town or city where was but one congregation, it usually calleth those saints *The Church*, in the singular number; as, the church of the Thessalonians, the church of Smyrna, Philadelphia, and the like; but when it speaketh of the saints in a nation or province, wherein there were sundry congregations, it frequently and usually calleth them by the name of *Churches*, in the plural number, as the churches of Asia, Galatia, Macedonia, and the like; which is further confirmed by what is written of sundry of those churches in particular, how they were assembled and met together, the whole church in one place, as the church at Jerusalem, the church at Antioch, the church at Corinth, and Cenchrea, though it were more near to Corinth, it being the port thereof, and answerable to a village, yet being a distinct congregation from Corinth, it had a church of its own, as well as Corinth had.

1 Cor. xiv. 21. Matt. xviii. 17. Rom. xvi. 1. 1 Thess. i. 1. Rev. ii. 3, and iii. 7. 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 19. Gal. i. 2. 2 Cor. viii. 1. 1 Thess. ii. 14. Acts, ii. 46, and v. 12, and vi. 2, and xiv. 27, and xv. 38. 1 Cor. v. 4, and xiv. 23. Rom. xvi. 1.

5. Nor can it with reason be thought but that every church appointed and ordained by Christ, had a ministry ordained and appointed for the same; and yet plain it is, that there were no ordinary officers appointed by Christ for any other than congregational churches; elders being appointed to feed, not all flocks, but the particular flock of God over which the Holy Ghost had made them overseers, and that flock they must attend, even the whole flock; and one con-

gregation being as much as any ordinary elder can attend, therefore there is no greater church than a congregation, which may ordinarily meet in one place.

Acts xx. 28.

## CHAP. IV.

Of the form of a visible church, and of church covenant.

1. SAINTS by calling must have a visible political union among themselves, or else they are not yet a particular church, as those similitudes hold forth, which the scripture makes use of to show the nature of particular churches, as a body, a building, house, hands, eyes, feet, and other members must be united, or else (remaining separate) are not a body. Stones, timber, though squared, hewn and polished, are not a house, until they are compacted and united ; so saints or believers in judgment of charity are not a church, unless orderly knit together.

1 Cor. xii. 27. 1 Tim. iii. 15. Eph. ii. 22. 1 Cor. xii. 15, 16, 17. Rev. i.

2. Particular churches cannot be distinguished one from another, but by their forms : Ephesus is not Smyrna, nor Pergamus, Thyatira, but each one a distinct society of itself, having officers of their own, which had not the charge of others ; virtues of their own, for which others are not praised ; corruptions of their own, for which others are not blamed.

3. This form is the visible covenant, agreement, or consent, whereby they give up themselves unto the Lord, to the observing of the ordinances of Christ together in the same society, which is usually called the church covenant : For we see not otherwise how members can have church power one over another mutually. The comparing of each particular church to a city, and unto a spouse, seemeth to conclude not only a

form, but that that form is by way of covenant. The covenant, as it was that which made the family of Abraham, and children of Israel, to be a church and people unto God, so it is that which now makes the several societies of Gentile believers to be churches in these days.

Exod. xix. 5, 8. Deut. xxix. 12, 13. Zech. xi. 14, and ix. 11. Eph. ii. 19. 2 Cor. xi. 2. Gen. xvii. 7. Deut. xxix. 12, 13. Eph. ii. 12, 13.

4. This voluntary agreement, consent, or covenant, (for all these are here taken for the same,) although the more express and plain it is, the more fully it puts us in mind of our mutual duty, and stirreth us up to it, and leaveth less room for the questioning of the truth of the church estate of a company of professors, and the truth of membership of particular persons; yet we conceive the substance of it is kept, where there is a real agreement and consent of a company of faithful persons to meet constantly together in one congregation, for the public worship of God, and their mutual edification; which real agreement and consent they do express by their constant practice in coming together for the public worship of God, and by their religious subjection to the ordinances of God there; the rather if we consider how scripture covenants have been entered into not only expressly by word of mouth, but by sacrifice, by hand writing and seal, and also sometimes by silent consent, without any writing or expression of words at all.

Exod. xix. 5, and xx. 8, and xxiv. 3, 17. Josh. xxiv. 18—24. Psalm, l. 5. Neh. ix. 38, and x. 1. Gen. xvii. Deut. xxix.

5. This form being by mutual covenant, it followeth, it is not faith in the heart, nor the profession of that faith, nor cohabitation, nor baptism. 1. Not faith in the heart, because that is invisible. 2. Not a bare profession, because that declareth them no more to be members of one church than another. 3. Not cohabitation: atheists or infidels may dwell together with believers. 4. Not baptism, because it presupposeth a church estate, as circumcision in the Old

Testament, which gave no being to the church, the church being before it, and in the wilderness without it. Seals presuppose a covenant already in being. One person is a complete subject of baptism, but one person is incapable of being a church.

6. All believers ought, as God giveth them opportunity thereunto, to endeavor to join themselves unto a particular church, and that in respect of the honor of Jesus Christ, in his example and institution, by the professed acknowledgment of, and subjection unto the order and ordinances of the gospel; as also in respect of their good of communion, founded upon their visible union, and contained in the promises of Christ's special presence in the church; whence they have fellowship with him, and in him one with another; also, for the keeping of them in the way of God's commandments, and recovering of them in case of wandering, which all Christ's sheep are subject to in this life, being unable to return of themselves; together with the benefit of their mutual edification, and of their posterity, that they may not be cut off from the privileges of the covenant. Otherwise, if a believer offends, he remains destitute of the remedy provided in that behalf. And should all believers neglect this duty of joining to all particular congregations, it might follow thereupon, that Christ should have no visible political churches upon earth.

Acts. ii. 47, and ix. 26. Matt. iii. 13, 14, 15. and xxviii. 19, 20. Psalms, cxxxiii. 2, 3. and lxxxvii. 7. Matt. xviii. 20. 1 John, i. 3. Ps. cxix. 176. 1 Peter, ii. 25. Eph. iv. 16. John, xxii. 24, 25. Matt. xviii. 15, 16, 17.

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## CHAP. V.

Of the first subject of church power; or, to whom church power doth first belong.

1. THE first subject of church power, is either supreme, or subordinate and ministerial. The supreme, by

way of gift from the Father, is the Lord Jesus Christ : The ministerial is either extraordinary as the apostles, prophets and evangelists ; or ordinary, as every particular congregational church.

Matt. xviii. 18. Rev. iii. 7. Isa. ix. 6. John, xx. 21, 23. 1 Cor. xiv. 32. Tit. i. 5. 1 Cor. v. 12.

2. Ordinary church power, is either the power of office, that is, such as is proper to the eldership ; or power of privilege, such as belongs to the brotherhood. The latter is in the brethren formally, and immediately from Christ, that is, so as it may be acted or exercised immediately by themselves ; the former is not in them formally or immediately, and therefore cannot be acted or exercised immediately by them, but is said to be in them, in that they design the persons unto office, who only are to act, or to exercise this power.

Rom. xii. 4, 8. Acts, i. 23, and vi. 3, 4, and xiv. 23. 1 Cor. x. 29, 30.

## CHAP. VI.

Of the officers of the church, and especially of pastors and teachers.

1. A CHURCH being a company of people combined together by covenant for the worship of God, it appeareth thereby, that there may be the essence and being of a church without any officers, seeing there is both the form and matter of a church ; which is implied when it is said, the apostles ordained elders in every church.

Acts xiv. 23.

2. Nevertheless, though officers be not absolutely necessary to the simple being of churches, when they be called, yet ordinarily to their calling they are, and to their well being, and therefore the Lord Jesus, out of his tender compassion, hath appointed and ordained officers, which he would not have done, if they had not been useful and needful for the church ; yea, being ascended into heaven, he received gifts for men, and

gave gifts to men, whereof officers for the church are justly accounted no small parts, they being to continue to the end of the world, and for the perfecting of all the saints.

Rom. x. 17. Jer. iii. 15. 1 Cor. xii. 28. Eph. iv. 11. Psalms, lxxviii. 18. Eph. iv. 8, 11, and iv. 12, 13.

3. These officers were either extraordinary or ordinary : extraordinary, as apostles, prophets, evangelists ; ordinary, as elders and deacons. The apostles, prophets, and evangelists, as they were called extraordinarily by Christ, so their office ended with themselves ; whence it is that Paul directing Timothy how to carry along church administrations, giveth no direction about the choice or course of apostles, prophets, or evangelists, but only of elders and deacons ; and when Paul was to take his last leave of the church of Ephesus, he committed the care of feeding the church to no other but unto the elders of that church. The like charge doth Peter commit to the elders.

1 Cor. xii. 28. Eph. iv. 11. Acts, viii. 6, 16, 19, and xi. 23. Rom. xi. 13. 1 Cor. iv. 9. 1 Tim. iii. 1, 2, 8 to 13. Tit. i. 5. Acts, xx. 17, 28. 1 Peter, v. 1, 2, 3.

4. Of elders, who are also in scripture called bishops, some attend chiefly to the ministry of the word, as the pastors and teachers ; others attend especially unto rule, who are therefore called ruling elders.\*

1 Tim. ii. 3. Phil. i. 1. Acts, xx. 17, 28. 1 Tim. v. 17.

5. The office of pastor and teacher, appears to be distinct. The pastor's special work is, to attend to exhortation, and therein to administer a word of wisdom ; the teacher is to attend to doctrine, and therein to administer a word of knowledge ; and either of them to administer the seals of that covenant, unto the dispensation whereof they are alike called ; as also to execute the censures, being but a kind of application of the word : The preaching of which, together with the application thereof, they are alike charged withal.

Eph. iv. 11. Rom. xii. 7, 8. 1 Cor. xii. 8. 2 Tim. iv. 1, 2. Titus, i. 9

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\* The first churches of Massachusetts were ordinarily furnished with a pastor, a teacher, and ruling elders. The offices of pastor and teacher are now united, and that of ruling elder is for the most part dropped.—*Editor.*



6. And forasmuch as both pastors and teachers are given by Christ for the perfecting of the saints, and edifying of his body; which saints and body of Christ is his church: and therefore we account pastors and teachers to be both of them church officers, and not the pastor for the church, and the teacher only for the schools: though this we gladly acknowledge, that schools are both lawful, profitable, and necessary for the training up of such in good literature or learning, as may afterwards be called forth unto office of pastor or teacher in the church.

Eph. iv. 11, 12, and i. 22, 23. 1 Sam. x. 12, 19, 20. 2 Kings, ii. 3, 15.

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## CHAP. VII.

Of ruling elders and deacons.

1. THE ruling elder's office is distinct from the office of pastor and teacher. The ruling elders are not so called, to exclude the pastors and teachers from ruling, because ruling and governing is common to these with the other, whereas attending to teach and preach the word is peculiar unto the former.

Rom. xii. 7, 8, 9. 1 Tim. v. 17. 1 Cor. xii. 28. Heb. xiii. 17. 1 Tim. v. 17.

2. The ruling elder's work is to join with the pastor and teacher in those acts of spiritual rule, which are distinct from the ministry of the word and sacraments committed to them. Of which sort these be as followeth: 1. To open and shut the doors of God's house, by the admission of members approved by the church; by ordination of officers chosen by the church, and by excommunication of notorious and obstinate offenders renounced by the church, and by restoring of penitents forgiven by the church. 2. To call the church together when there is occasion, and seasonably to dismiss them again. 3. To prepare matters in



private, that in public they may be carried to an end with less trouble, and more speedy despatch. 4. To moderate the carriage of all matters in the church assembled; as, to propound matters to the church, to order the season of speech and silence, and to pronounce sentence according to the mind of Christ, with the consent of the church. 5. To be guides and leaders to the church, in all matters whatsoever pertaining to church administrations and actions. 6. To see that none in the church live inordinately, out of rank and place, without a calling, or idly in their calling. 7. To prevent and heal such offences in life or in doctrine, as might corrupt the church. 8. To feed the flock of God with a word of admonition. 9. And as they shall be sent for, to visit and pray over their sick brethren. 10. And at other times as opportunity shall serve thereunto.

1 Tim. v. 17. 2 Chron. xxiii. 19. Rev. xxi. 12. 1 Tim. iv. 14. Matt. xxviii. 17. 2 Cor. ii. 7, 8. Acts, ii. 6, and xxi. 18, 22, 23, and vi. 2, 3, and xiii. 15. 2 Cor. viii. 19. Heb. xiii. 7, 17. 2 Thess. ii. 10—12. Acts, xx. 28, 32. 1 Thess. v. 12. James, v. 14. Acts, xx. 20.

3. The office of a deacon is instituted in the church by the Lord Jesus; sometimes they are called helps. The scripture telleth us how they should be qualified, “Grave, not double tongued, not given to much wine, not given to filthy lucre.” They must first be proved, and then use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. The office and work of a deacon, is to receive the offerings of the church, gifts given to the church, and to keep the treasury of the church, and therewith to serve the tables which the church is to provide for; as the Lord’s table, the table of the ministers, and of such as are in necessity, to whom they are to distribute in simplicity.

Acts vi. 3, 6. Phil. i. 1. 1 Tim. iii. 8. 1 Cor. xii. 23. 1 Tim. iii. 8, 9. Acts, iv. 35, and vi. 2, 3. Rom. xii. 8.

4. The office therefore being limited unto the care of the temporal good things of the church, it extends not to the attendance upon, and administration of the

spiritual things thereof, as the word and sacraments, or the like.

1 Cor. vii. 17.

5. The ordinance of the apostle, and practice of the church, commends the Lord's day as a fit time for the contribution of the saints.

1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2, 3.

6. The instituting of all these officers in the church, is the work of God himself, of the Lord Jesus Christ, of the Holy Ghost ; and therefore such officers as he hath not appointed, are altogether unlawful either to be placed in the church, or to be retained therein, and are to be looked at as human creatures, mere inventions and appointments of man, to the great dishonor of Christ Jesus, the Lord of his house, the king of his church, whether popes, patriarchs, cardinals, arch-bishops, lord-bishops, arch-deacons, officials, commissaries, and the like. These and the rest of that hierarchy and retinue, not being plants of the Lord's planting, shall all be certainly rooted out and cast forth.

1 Cor. xii. 28. Eph. iv. 8, 11. Acts, xx. 28. Matt. xv. 13.

7. The Lord hath appointed ancient widows, where they may be had, to minister in the church, in giving attendance to the sick, and to give succour unto them, and others in the like necessities.

1 Tim. v. 9, 10.

## CHAP. VIII.

Of the election of church officers.

1. No man may take the honor of a church officer unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.

Heb. v. 4.

2. Calling unto office is either immediate, by Christ himself, such was the call of the apostles and prophets,

this manner of calling ended with them as hath been said : or mediate, by the church.

Gal. i. 1. Acts, xiv. 23, and vi. 3.

3. It is meet that before any be ordained or chosen officers, they should first be tried and proved, because hands are not suddenly to be laid upon any, and both elders and deacons must be of honest and good report.

1 Tim. v. 22, and vii. 10. Acts, xvi. 2, and vi. 3.

4. The things in respect of which they are to be tried, are those gifts and virtues which the scripture requireth in men that are to be elected into such places, viz. that elders must be blameless, sober, apt to teach, and endued with such other qualifications as are laid down, 1 Tim. iii. 2. Tit. i. 6 to 9. Deacons to be fitted as is directed, Acts vi. 3. 1 Tim. iii. 8 to 11.

5. Officers are to be called by such churches whereunto they are to minister. Of such moment is the preservation of this power, that the churches exercised it in the presence of the apostles.

Acts, xiv. 23, and i. 23, and vi. 3, 4, 5.

6. A church being free, cannot become subject to any, but by a free election ; yet when such a people do choose any to be over them in the Lord, then do they become subject, and most willingly submit to their ministry in the Lord, whom they have so chosen.

Gal. v. 13. Heb. xiii. 17.

7. And if the church have power to choose their officers and ministers, then in case of manifest unworthiness and delinquency, they have power also to depose them : for, to open and shut, to choose and refuse, to constitute in office and remove from office, are acts belonging to the same power.

Rom. xvi. 17.

8. We judge it much conducing to the well being and communion of churches, that where it may conveniently be done, neighbour churches be advised withal, and their help be made use of in the trial of church officers, in order to their choice.

Cant. viii. 8, 9.

9. The choice of such church officers belongeth not to the civil magistrates, as such, or diocesan bishops, or patrons ; for of these, or any such like, the scripture is wholly silent, as having any power therein.

## CHAP. IX.

Of ordination, and imposition of hands.

1. CHURCH officers are not only to be chosen by the church, but also to be ordained by imposition of hands and prayer, with which at the ordination of elders, fasting also is to be joined.

Acts, xiii. 3, and xiv. 23. 1 Tim. v. 22.

2. This ordination we account nothing else, but the solemn putting a man into his place and office in the church, whereunto he had right before by election ; being like the installing of a magistrate in the commonwealth. Ordination therefore is not to go before, but to follow election. The essence and substance of the outward calling of an ordinary officer in the church, doth not consist in his ordination, but in his voluntary and free election by the church, and his accepting of that election ; whereupon is founded that relation between pastor and flock, between such a minister and such a people. Ordination doth not constitute an officer, nor give him the essentials of his office. The apostles were elders without imposition of hands by men ; Paul and Barnabas were officers before that imposition of hands, Acts, xiii. 3. The posterity of Levi were priests and Levites, before hands were laid on them by the children of Israel.

Numb. viii. 10. Acts, vi. 5, 6, and xiii. 2, 3, and xiv. 23.

3. In such churches where there are elders, imposition of hands in ordination is to be performed by those elders.

1 Tim. iv. 14. Acts, xiii. 3. 1 Tim. v. 22.

4. In such churches where there are no elders, imposition of hands may be performed by some of the brethren orderly chosen by the church thereunto. For if the people may elect officers, which is the greater, and wherein the substance of the office doth consist, they may much more, occasion and need so requiring, impose hands in ordination, which is less, and but the accomplishment of the other.\*

Numb. viii. 10.

5. Nevertheless, in such churches where there are no elders, and the church so desire, we see not why imposition of hands may not be performed by the elders of other churches. Ordinary officers laid hands upon the officers of many churches: the presbytery at Ephesus laid hands upon Timothy, an evangelist; the presbytery at Antioch laid hands upon Paul and Barnabas.

1 Tim. iv. 14. Acts, xiii. 3.

6. Church officers are officers to one church, even that particular church over which the Holy Ghost hath made them overseers. Insomuch as elders are commanded to feed, not all flocks, but that flock which is committed to their faith and trust, and dependeth upon them. Nor can constant residence at one congregation be necessary for a minister, no, nor yet lawful, if he be not a minister to one congregation only, but to the church universal; because he may not attend one part only of the church to which he is a minister, but he is called to attend unto all the flock.

1 Pet. v. 2. Acts, xx. 23.

7. He that is clearly loosed from his office relation unto that church whereof he was a minister, cannot be looked at as an officer, nor perform any act of office in any other church, unless he be again orderly

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\* In the early settlement of this country, ministers were commonly ordained by the brethren of the churches over which they were settled. If neighboring ministers were present, it was only to give advice. It was a first principle with our fathers, that every church had the power of *self-subsistence*—which she could not have, unless authorized to ordain her own ministers.—*Editor.*

called unto office ; which when it shall be, we know nothing to hinder, but imposition of hands also in his ordination ought to be used towards him again. For so Paul the apostle received imposition of hands twice at least from Ananias.\*

Acts, ix. 17, and xiii. 3.

## CHAP. X.

Of the power of the church, and its presbytery.

1. SUPREME and lordly power over all the churches upon earth doth only belong unto Jesus Christ, who is king of the church, and the head thereof. He hath the government upon his shoulders, and hath all power given to him both in heaven and earth.

Psalms, ii. 6. Eph. i. 21, 22. Isa. ix. 6. Matt. xxviii. 18.

2. A company of professed believers ecclesiastically confederate, as they are a church before they have officers, and without them ; so even in that estate, subordinate church power under Christ, delegated to them by him, doth belong to them in such a manner as is before expressed, Chap. v. sect. 2, and as flowing from the very nature and essence of a church : it being natural to all bodies, and so unto a church body, to be furnished with sufficient power for its own preservation and subsistence.

Acts, i. 23, and xiv. 23, and vi. 3, 4. Matt. xviii. 17. 1 Cor. v. 4, 5.

3. This government of the church is a mixt government, and so hath been acknowledged long before the term of independency was heard of. In respect of Christ, the head and King of the church, and the sovereign power residing in him, and exercised by him, it is a monarchy ; in respect of the body or brotherhood

\* No difference is made in the Platform, between Ordination and Installation—imposition of hands being used in both cases.—*Editor.*



of the church, and power from Christ granted unto them, it resembles a democracy; in respect of the presbytery, and power committed unto them, it is an aristocracy.

Rev. iii. 7. 1 Cor. v. 12. 1 Tim. v. 27.

4. The sovereign power which is peculiar unto Christ, is exercised, 1. In calling the church out of the world into holy fellowship with himself. 2. In instituting the ordinances of his worship, and appointing his ministers and officers for the dispensing of them. 3. In giving laws for the ordering of all our ways, and the ways of his house. 4. In giving power and life to all his institutions, and to his people by them. 5. In protecting and delivering his church against and from all the enemies of their peace.

Gal. i. 4. Rev. v. 8, 9. Matt. xxviii. 20. Eph. iv. 8, 11. James, iv. 12. Isa. xxxiii. 22. 1 Tim. iii. 15. 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. Isa. xxxii. 2. Luke i. 71.

5. The power granted by Christ unto the body of the church and brotherhood, is a prerogative or privilege which the church doth exercise, 1. In choosing their own officers, whether elders or deacons. 2. In admission of their own members, and therefore there is great reason they should have power to remove any from their fellowship again. Hence in case of offence, any brother hath power to convince and admonish an offending brother; and in case of not hearing him, to take one or two more to set on the admonition; and in case of not hearing them, to proceed to tell the church; and as his offence may require, the whole church hath power to proceed to the censure of him, whether by admonition or excommunication; and upon his repentance, to restore him again unto his former communion.

Acts, vi. 3, 5, and xiv. 23, and ix. 26. Matt. xviii. 15, 16, 17. Tit. iii. 10. Col. iv. 17. 2 Cor. ii. 7, 8.

6. In case an elder offend incorrigibly, the matter so requiring, as the church had power to call him to office, so they have power according to order (the council of other churches, where it may be had, di-



recting thereto) to remove him from his office ; and being now but a member, in case he add contumacy to his sin, the church that had power to receive him into their fellowship, hath also the same power to cast him out, that they have concerning any other member.\*

Col. iv. 17. Rom. xvi. 17. Matt. xviii. 17.

7. Church government or rule, is placed by Christ in the officers of the church, who are therefore called rulers, while they rule with God ; yet in case of mal-administration, they are subject to the power of the church, as hath been said before. The Holy Ghost frequently, yea always, where it mentioneth church rule, and church government, ascribeth it to elders ; whereas the work and duty of the people is expressed in the phrase of obeying their elders, and submitting themselves unto them in the Lord. So as it is manifest, that an organic or complete church is a body politic, consisting of some that are governors, and some that are governed in the Lord.

1 Tim. v. 17. Heb. xiii. 17. 1 Thess. v. 12. Rom. xii. 8. 1 Cor. xii. 28, 29. Heb. xiii. 7, 17.

8. The power which Christ has committed to the elders, is to feed and rule the church of God, and accordingly to call the church together upon any weighty occasion ; when the members so called, without just cause, may not refuse to come, nor when they are come, depart before they are dismissed, nor speak in the church before they have leave from the elders ; nor continue so doing when they require silence ; nor may they oppose nor contradict the judgment or sentence of the elders, without sufficient and weighty cause, because such practices are manifestly contrary unto order and government, and inlets of disturbance, and tend to confusion.

Acts, xx. 28, and vi. 2. Numb. xvi. 12. Ezek. xlvi. 10. Acts, xiii. 15. Hos. iv. 4.

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\* The Platform makes it incumbent on a minister to be a *member* of the church over which he is pastor—a regulation which we humbly conceive ought never to have been violated.—*Editor*.

9. It belongs also unto the elders to examine any officers or members before they be received of the church; to receive the accusations brought to the church, and to prepare them for the church's hearing. In handling of offences and other matters before the church, they have power to declare and publish the counsel and will of God touching the same, and to pronounce sentence with consent of the church. Lastly, they have power, when they dismiss the people, to bless them in the name of the Lord.

Rev. ii. 2. 1 Tim. v. 19. Acts, xxi. 18, 22, 23. 1 Cor. v. 4, 5. Num. vi. 23 to 26.

10. This power of government in the elders doth not any wise prejudice the power of privilege in the brotherhood; as neither the power of privilege in the brethren, doth prejudice the power of government in the elders, but they may sweetly agree together; as we may see in the example of the apostles, furnished with the greatest church power, who took in the concurrence and consent of the brethren in church administrations. Also that scripture, 2 Cor. ii. 9, and x. 6, do declare, That what the churches were to act and do in these matters, they were to do in a way of obedience, and that not only to the direction of the apostles, but also of their ordinary elders.

Acts, xiv. 15, 23, and vi. 2. 1 Cor. v. 4. 2 Cor. ii. 6, 7. Heb. xiii. 17.

11. From the premises, namely, That the ordinary power of government belonging only to the elders, power of privilege remaineth with the brotherhood (as the power of judgment in matters of censure, and power of liberty in matters of liberty) it followeth, that in an organic church, and right administration, all church acts proceed after the manner of a mixt administration, so as no church act can be consummated or perfected without the consent of both.

## CHAP. XI.

Of the maintenance of church officers.

1. THE apostle concludes, that necessary and sufficient maintenance is due unto the ministers of the word, from the law of nature and nations, from the law of Moses, the equity thereof, as also the rule of common reason. Moreover, the scripture doth not only call elders laborers and workmen, but also speaking of them doth say, that the laborer is worthy of his hire; and requires, that he which is taught in the word should communicate to him in all good things; and mentions it as an ordinance of the Lord, that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel; and forbiddeth the muzzling of the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn.

1 Cor. ix. 14, 15. Matt. ix. 38, and x. 10. 1 Tim. v. 18. Gal. vi. 6.  
1 Cor. ix. 9, 14.

2. The scriptures alledged, requiring this maintenance as a bounden duty, and due debt, and not as a matter of alms and free gift, therefore people are not at liberty to do or not to do, what and when they please in this matter, no more than in any other commanded duty, and ordinance of the Lord; but ought of duty to minister of their carnal things, to them that labor among them in the word and doctrine, as well as they ought to pay any other workmen their wages, and to discharge and satisfy their other debts, or to submit themselves to observe any other ordinance of the Lord.

Rom. xv. 27. 1 Cor. ix. 21.

3. The apostle (Gal. vi. 6,) enjoining that he which is taught communicate to him that teacheth in all good things, doth not leave it arbitrary, what or how much a man shall give, or in what proportion, but even the latter, as well as the former is prescribed and appointed by the Lord.

1 Cor. xvi. 2.

4. Not only members of churches, but all that are taught in the word, are to contribute unto him that teacheth, in all good things. In case that congregations are defective in their contributions, the deacons are to call upon them to do their duty ; if their call sufficeth not, the church by her power is to require it of their members ; and where church power, through the corruption of men, doth not, or cannot attain the end, the magistrate is to see that the ministry be duly provided for, as appears from the commended example of Nehemiah. The magistrates are nursing-fathers, and nursing-mothers, and stand charged with the custody of both tables ; because it is better to prevent a scandal that it may not come, and easier also, than to remove it when it is given. It is most suitable to rule, that by the church's care each man should know his proportion according to rule, what he should do, before he do it, that so his judgment and heart may be satisfied in what he doth, and just offence prevented in what is done.

Gal. vi. 6. Acts, vi. 3, 4. Neh. xiii. 11. Isa. xlix. 23. 2 Cor. viii. 13, 14.

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## CHAP. XII.

Of the admission of members into the church.

1. THE doors of the churches of Christ upon earth, do not by God's appointment stand so wide open, that all sorts of people, good or bad, may freely enter therein at their pleasure, but such as are admitted thereto as members, ought to be examined and tried first, whether they be fit and meet to be received into church society, or not. The eunuch of Ethiopia, before his admission, was examined by Philip, whether he did believe on Jesus Christ with all his heart. The

angel of the church at Ephesus is commended for trying such as said they were apostles and were not. There is like reason for trying of them that profess to be believers. The officers are charged with the keeping of the doors of the church, and therefore are in a special manner to make trial of the fitness of such who enter. Twelve angels are set at the gates of the temple, lest such as were ceremonially unclean should enter thereinto.

2 Chron. xxiii. 19. Matt. xiii. 25, and xxii. 12. Acts, viii. 37. Rev. ii. 2. Acts, ix. 26. Rev. xxi. 12. 2 Chron. xxiii. 19.

2. The things which are requisite to be found in all church members, are *repentance* from sin, and *faith* in Jesus Christ ; and therefore these are the things whereof men are to be examined at their admission into the church, and which then they must profess and hold forth in such sort, as may satisfy rational charity that the things are there indeed. John Baptist admitted men to baptism, confessing and bewailing their sins ; and of others it is said, that they came, and confessed and showed their deeds.

Acts, ii. 38 to 42, and viii. 37. Matt. iii. 6. Acts, xix. 8.

3. The weakest measure of faith is to be accepted in those that desire to be admitted into the church, because weak christians, if sincere, have the substance of that faith, repentance and holiness which is required in church members ; and such have most need of the ordinances for their confirmation and growth in grace. The Lord Jesus would not quench the smoking flax, nor break the bruised reed, but gather the tender lambs in his arms and carry them gently in his bosom. Such charity and tenderness is to be used, as the weakest christian, if sincere, may not be excluded nor discouraged. Severity of examination is to be avoided.

Rom. xiv. 1. Matt. xii. 20. Isa. xl. 11.

4. In case any through excessive fear, or other infirmity, be unable to make their personal relation of their spiritual estate in public, it is sufficient that the elders having received private satisfaction, make relation



thereof in public before the church, they testifying their assents thereunto ; this being the way that tendeth most to edification. But where persons are of greater abilities, there it is most expedient that they make their relations and confessions personally with their own mouth, as David professeth of himself.

Psalm, lxvi. 16.

5. A personal and public confession, and declaring of God's manner of working upon the soul, is both lawful, expedient and useful, in sundry respects, and upon sundry grounds. Those three thousand, Acts ii. 37, 41, before they were admitted by the apostles, did manifest that they were pricked in their hearts at Peter's sermon, together with earnest desire to be delivered from their sins, which now wounded their consciences, and their ready receiving of the word of promise and exhortation. We are to be ready to render a reason of the hope that is in us, to every one that asketh us ; therefore we must be able and ready upon any occasion to declare and show our repentance for sin, faith unfeigned, and effectual calling, because these are the reasons of a well grounded hope. I have not hidden thy righteousness from the great congregation.

Psalm xl. 10. 1 Pet. iii. 15. Heb. xi. 1. Eph. i. 18.

6. This profession of faith and repentance, as it must be made by such at their admission, that were never in church society before ; so nothing hindereth but the same way also be performed by such as have formerly been members of some other church, and the church to which they now join themselves as members may lawfully require the same.\* Those three thousand, Acts ii., which made their confession, were members of the church of the Jews before, so were they that were baptized by John. Churches may err in their admission, and persons regularly admitted may fall

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\* Many churches have taken offence in these days, because others would not receive their members, when recommended, without examination. The Platform, it will be seen, is explicit on this subject.—*Editor.*

into offence. Otherwise, if churches might obtrude their members, or if church members might obtrude themselves upon other churches without due trial, the matter so requiring, both the liberty of churches would hereby be infringed in that they might not examine those, concerning whose fitness for communion they were unsatisfied; and besides the infringing of their liberty, the churches themselves would unavoidably be corrupted, and the ordinances defiled, whilst they might not refuse, but must receive the unworthy; which is contrary unto the scripture, teaching that all churches are sisters, and therefore equal.

Matt. iii. 5, 6. Gal. ii. 4. 1 Tim. v. 24. Cant. viii. 8.

7. The like trial is to be required from such members of the church as were born in the same, or received their membership and were baptized in their infancy or minority, by virtue of the covenant of their parents, when being grown up unto years of discretion, they shall desire to be made partakers of the Lord's supper; unto which, because holy things must not be given to the unworthy, therefore it is requisite, that these as well as others should come to their trial and examination, and manifest their faith and repentance by an open profession thereof, before they are received to the Lord's supper, and otherwise not to be admitted thereunto. Yet these church members that were so born, or received in their childhood, before they are capable of being made partakers of full communion, have many privileges which others, not church members, have not; they are in covenant with God, have the seal thereof upon them, viz. baptism; and so if not regenerated, yet are in a more hopeful way of attaining regenerating grace, and all the spiritual blessings both of the covenant and seal: they are also under church-watch, and consequently subject to the reprehensions, admonitions, and censures thereof, for their healing and amendment, as need shall require.

Matt. vii. 6. 1 Cor. xi. 27.



## CHAP. XIII.

Of church members their removal from one church to another, and of recommendation and dismissal.

1. CHURCH members may not remove or depart from the church, and so one from another as they please, nor without just and weighty cause, but ought to live and dwell together, forasmuch as they are commanded, not to forsake the assembling of themselves together. Such departure tends to the dissolution and ruin of the body, as the pulling of stones and pieces of timber from the building, and of members from the natural body, tend to the destruction of the whole.

Heb. x. 25.

2. It is therefore the duty of church members, in such times and places where counsel may be had, to consult with the church whereof they are members about their removal, that accordingly they having their approbation, may be encouraged, or otherwise desist. They who are joined with consent, should not depart without consent, except forced thereunto.

Prov. xi. 16.

3. If a member's departure be manifestly unsafe and sinful, the church may not consent thereunto; for in so doing, they should not act in faith, and should partake with him in his sin. If the case be doubtful, and the person not to be persuaded, it seemeth best to leave the matter unto God, and not forcibly to detain him.

Rom. xiv. 23. 1 Tim. v. 22. Acts, xxi. 14.

4. Just reasons for a member's removal of himself from the church, are, 1. If a man cannot continue without partaking in sin. 2. In case of personal persecution; so Paul departed from the disciples at Damascus. Also in case of general persecution, when all are scattered. 3. In case of real, and not only pretended want of competent subsistence, a door being

opened for better supply in another place, together with the means of spiritual edification. In these, or like cases, a member may lawfully remove, and the church cannot lawfully detain him.\*

Eph. v. 11. Acts, ix. 25, 29, 30, and viii. 1. Neh. xiii. 20.

5. To separate from a church, either out of contempt of their holy fellowship, or out of covetousness, or for greater enlargements, with just grief to the church; or out of schism, or want of love, and out of a spirit of contention in respect of some unkindness, or some evil only conceived, or indeed in the church, which might and should be tolerated and healed with a spirit of meekness, and of which evil the church is not yet convinced (though perhaps himself be) nor admonished: for these or the like reasons to withdraw from public communion in word, or seals, or censures, is unlawful and sinful.

2 Tim. iv. 10. Rom. xvi. 17. Jude, 19. Eph. iv. 2, 3. Col. iii. 13. Gal. vi. 1, 2.

6. Such members as have orderly removed their habitation, ought to join themselves unto the church in order where they do inhabit, if it may be; otherwise they can neither perform the duties nor receive the privileges of members. Such an example tolerated in some, is apt to corrupt others, which if many should follow, would threaten the dissolution and confusion of churches, contrary to the scripture.

Isa. lvi. 8. Acts, ix. 26. 1 Cor. xiv. 33.

7. Order requires, that a member thus removing, have letters testimonial and of dismissal from the church whereof he yet is, unto the church whereunto he desireth to be joined, lest the church should be deluded; that the church may receive him in faith, and not be corrupted by receiving deceivers and false brethren. Until the person dismissed be received into another church, he ceaseth not by his letters of dis-

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\* The individual concerned must, from the nature of the case, be his own judge, whether he can be better edified in some other church, and consequently whether it is his duty to remove.—*Editor.*

mission to be a member of the church whereof he was, the church cannot make a member no member, but by excommunication.\*

Acts, xviii. 27.

8. If a member be called to remove only for a time, where a church is, letters of recommendation are requisite and sufficient for communion with that church in the ordinances and in their watch; as Phebe, a servant of the church at Cenchrea, had letters written for her to the church at Rome, that she might be received as becometh saints.

Rom. xvi. 1, 2. 2 Cor. iii. 1.

9. Such letters of recommendation and dismissal, were written for Apollos; for Marcus to the Colossians; for Phebe to the Romans, for sundry others to other churches. And the apostle telleth us, that some persons, not sufficiently known otherwise, have special need of such letters, though he for his part had no need thereof. The use of them is to be a benefit and help to the party for whom they are written, and for the furthering of his receiving amongst the saints in the place whereto he goeth, and the due satisfaction of them in their receiving of him.

Acts, xviii. 27. Col. iv. 10. Rom. xvi. 1. 2 Cor. iii. 1.

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## CHAP. XIV.

Of excommunication and other censures.

1. THE censures of the church are appointed by Christ for the preventing, removing, and healing of offences in the church; for the reclaiming and gaining of offending brethren; for the deterring others from the like offences; for purging out the leaven which

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\* A timely admonition to those churches which are in the habit of dismissing members at their own request, without censure, and without recommendation.—*Ed.*

may infect the whole lump ; for vindicating the honor of Christ, and of his church, and the holy profession of the gospel ; and for preventing of the wrath of God, that may justly fall upon the church, if they should suffer his covenant, and the seals thereof to be profaned by notorious and obstinate offenders.

1 Tim. v. 20. Deut. xvii. 12, 13. Jude, 19. Deut. xiii. 11. 1 Cor. v. 6. Rom. ii. 24. Rev. ii. 14—16, 20.

2. If an offence be private, one brother offending another, the offender is to go and acknowledge his repentance for it unto his offended brother, who is then to forgive him ; but if the offender neglect or refuse to do it, the brother offended is to go and convince and admonish him of it, between themselves privately : If thereupon the offender be brought to repent of his offence, the admonisher hath won his brother ; but if the offender hear not his brother, the brother offended is to take with him one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established, whether the word of admonition, if the offender receive it ; or the word of complaint, if he refuse it ; for if he refuse it, the offended brother is by the mouth of the elders to tell the church, and if he hear the church, and declare the same by penitent confession, he is recovered and gained ; and if the church discern him to be willing to hear, yet not fully convinced of his offence, as in case of heresy, they are to dispense to him a public admonition ; which declaring the offender to lie under the public offence of the church, doth thereby withhold or suspend him from the holy fellowship of the Lord's supper, till his offence be removed by penitent confession. If he still continue obstinate, they are to cast him out by excommunication.

Matt. v. 23, 24. Luke, xvii. 3, 4. Matt. xviii. 15—17. Tit. iii. 10.

3. But if the offence be more public at first, and of a more heinous and criminal nature, to wit, such as are condemned by the light of nature, then the church,

without such gradual proceeding, is to cast out the offender from their holy communion, for the further mortifying of his sin, and the healing of his soul in the day of the Lord Jesus.

1 Cor. v. 4, 5, 11.

4. In dealing with an offender, great care is to be taken, that we be neither overstrict or rigorous, nor too indulgent or remiss; our proceeding herein ought to be with a spirit of meekness, considering ourselves, lest we also be tempted; and that the best of us have need of much forgiveness from the Lord. Yet the winning and healing of the offender's soul, being the end of these endeavors, we must not daub with untempered mortar, nor heal the wounds of our brethren slightly. On some have compassion, others save with fear.

Gal. vi. 1, Matt. xviii. 34, 35. Ezek. xiii. 10.

5. While the offender remains excommunicate, the church is to refrain from all member-like communion with him in spiritual things, and also from all familiar communion with him in civil things, further than the necessity of natural, domestical or civil relations do require, and are therefore to forbear to eat and drink with him, that he may be ashamed.

Matt. xviii. 17. 1 Cor. v. 11. 2 Thess. iii. 6, 14.

6. Excommunication being a spiritual punishment, it doth not prejudice the excommunicate in, nor deprive him of his civil rights, and therefore toucheth not princes or other magistrates in point of their civil dignity or authority; and the excommunicate being but as a publican and a heathen, (heathens being lawfully permitted to come to hear the word in church assemblies,) we acknowledge therefore the like liberty of hearing the word, may be permitted to persons excommunicate, that is permitted unto heathen. And because we are not without hope of his recovery, we are not to account him as an enemy, but to admonish him as a brother.

1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25. 2 Thess. iii. 14.

7. If the Lord sanctify the censure to the offender, so as by the grace of Christ he doth testify his repent-



ance with humble confession of his sins, and judging of himself, giving glory unto God, the church is then to forgive him, and to comfort him, and to restore him to the wonted brotherly communion which formerly he enjoyed with them.

<sup>2</sup> Cor. ii. 7, 8.

8. The suffering of profane or scandalous livers to continue in fellowship, and partake in the sacraments, is doubtless a great sin in those that have power in their hands to redress it, and do it not. Nevertheless, inasmuch as Christ and his apostles in their times, and the prophets and other godly in theirs, did lawfully partake of the Lord's commanded ordinances in the Jewish church, and neither taught nor practised separation from the same, though unworthy ones were permitted therein; and inasmuch as the faithful in the church of Corinth, wherein were many unworthy persons and practices, are never commanded to absent themselves from the sacraments, because of the same; therefore the godly in like cases are not presently to separate.

Rev. ii. 14, 15, 20. Matt. xxiii. 3. Acts, iii. 1. 1 Cor. vi., and xv. 12.

9. As separation from such a church wherein profane and scandalous persons are tolerated, is not presently necessary; so for the members thereof, otherwise unworthy, hereupon to abstain from communicating with such a church in the participation of the sacraments, is unlawful. For as it were unreasonable for an innocent person to be punished for the faults of others, wherein he hath no hand, and whereunto he gave no consent; so it is more unreasonable, that a godly man should neglect duty, and punish himself, in not coming for his portion in the blessing of the seals as he ought, because others are suffered to come that ought not; especially, considering that himself doth neither consent to their sins, nor to their approaching to the ordinance in their sin, nor to the neglect of others who should put them away, and do not; but on the contrary doth

heartily mourn for these things, modestly and seasonably stir up others to do their duty. If the church cannot be reformed, they may use their liberty as is specified, chap. 13, sect. 4. But this all the godly are bound unto, even every one to do his endeavor, according to his power and place, that the unworthy may be duly proceeded against, by the church to whom this matter doth appertain.

2 Chron. xxx. 13. Gen. xviii. 25. Ezek. ix. 4.

## CHAP. XV.

Of the communion of churches one with another.

1. **ALTHOUGH** churches be distinct, and therefore may not be confounded one with another ; and equal, and therefore have not dominion one over another ; yet all the churches ought to preserve church communion one with another, because they are all united unto Christ, not only as a mystical, but as a political head, whence is derived a communion suitable thereunto.

Rev. i. 4. Cant. viii. 8. Rom. xvi. 16. 1 Cor. xvi. 19. Acts, 15, 23. Rev. ii. 1.

2. The communion of churches is exercised sundry ways. 1. By way of mutual care, in taking thought for one another's welfare. 2. By way of consultation one with another, when we have occasion to require the judgment and counsel of other churches, touching any person or cause wherewith they may be better acquainted than ourselves. As the church of Antioch consulted with the apostles and elders of the church at Jerusalem, about the question of circumcision of the Gentiles, and about the false teachers that broached that doctrine. In which case, when any church wanteth light or peace amongst themselves, it is a way of communion of churches, according to the word, to



meet together by their elders and other messengers in a synod, to consider and argue the points in doubt or difference; and having found out the way of truth and peace, to commend the same by their letters and messengers to the churches whom the same may concern. But if a church be rent with divisions among themselves, or lie under any open scandal, and yet refuse to consult with other churches, for healing or removing of the same, it is matter of just offence both to the Lord Jesus and to other churches, as bewraying too much want of mercy and faithfulness, not to seek to bind up the breaches and wounds of the church and brethren: and therefore the state of such a church calleth aloud upon other churches, to exercise a fuller act of brotherly communion, to wit, by way of admonition. 3. A third way then of communion of churches, is by way of admonition; to wit, in case any public offence be found in a church, which they either discern not, or are slow in proceeding to use the means for the removing and healing of.\* Paul had no authority over Peter, yet when he saw Peter not walking with a right foot, he publicly rebuked him before the church. Though churches have no more authority one over another, than one apostle had over another, yet as one apostle might admonish another, so may one church admonish another, and yet without usurpation. In which case, if the church that lieth under offence, do not hearken to the church that doth admonish her, the church is to acquaint other neighbor churches with that offence which the offending church still lieth under, together with the neglect of their brotherly admonition given unto them; whereupon those other churches are to join in seconding the admonition formerly given; and if still the offending church continue in obstinacy and impenitency, they may forbear communion with them, and are to proceed to make use of the help of

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\* In former times, this third way of communion was not unfrequently practised. Latterly, it has been entirely disused.—*Editor.*

a synod, or council of neighbor churches walking orderly (if a greater cannot conveniently be had) for their conviction. If they hear not the synod, the synod having declared them to be obstinate, particular churches approving and accepting the judgment of the synod, are to declare the sentence of non-communion respectively concerning them; and thereupon, out of religious care to keep their own communion pure, they may justly withdraw themselves from participation with them at the Lord's table, and from such other acts of holy communion as the communion of churches doth otherwise allow and require. Nevertheless, if any members of such a church as liveth under public offence, do not consent to the offence of the church, but do in due sort bear witness against it, they are still to be received to wonted communion; for it is not equal that the innocent should suffer with the offensive. Yea, furthermore, if such innocent members, after due waiting in the use of all good means for the healing of the offence of their own church, shall at last, with the allowance of the council of neighbor churches, withdraw from the fellowship of their own church, and offer themselves to the fellowship of another, we judge it lawful for the other church to receive them (being otherwise fit) as if they had been orderly dismissed to them from their own church. 4. A fourth way of communion of churches is by way of participation. The members of one church occasionally coming to another, we willingly admit them to partake with us at the Lord's table, it being the seal of our communion, not only with Christ, nor only with the members of our own church, but also of all the churches of the saints; in which regard, we refuse not to baptize their children presented to us, if either their own minister be absent, or such a fruit of holy fellowship be desired with us. In like case such churches as are furnished with more ministers than one, do willingly afford one of their own ministers to supply the place of an absent or sick min-

ister of another church for a needful season. 5. A fifth way of church communion is by way of recommendation, when the member of one church, hath occasion to reside in another church, if but for a season, we commend him to their watchful fellowship by letters of recommendation, but if he be called to settle his abode there, we commit him according to his desire to the fellowship of their covenant, by letters of dismission. 6. A sixth way of church communion is, in case of *need*, to minister relief and succor one unto another, either of able members, to furnish them with officers, or of outward support, to the necessities of poorer churches, as did the churches of the Gentiles contribute liberally to the poor saints at Jerusalem.

Cant. viii. 8. Acts, xv. 2, 6, 22, 23. Ezek, xxxiv. 4. Gal. ii. 11—14. Matt. xviii. 15, 16, 17, by proportion. Gen. xviii. 25. 1 Cor. xii. 13. Rom. xvi. 1. Acts, xviii. 27, and xi. 22, 29. Rom. xiii. 26, 27.

3. When a company of believers purpose to gather into church fellowship, it is requisite for their safer proceeding, and the maintaining of the communion of churches, that they signify their intent unto the neighbor churches, walking according unto the order of the gospel, and desire their presence, and help, and right hand of fellowship, which they ought readily to give unto them, when there is no just cause to except against their proceedings.

Gal. ii. 1, 2, and 9, by proportion.

4. Besides these several ways of communion, there is also a way of propagation of churches: when a church shall grow too numerous, it is a way, and fit season, to propagate one church out of another, by sending forth such of their members as are willing to remove, and to procure some officers to them, as may enter with them into church estate amongst themselves. As bees, when the hive is too full, issue forth by swarms, and are gathered into other hives, so the churches of Christ may do the same upon like necessity; and therein hold forth to them the right hand of

fellowship, both in their gathering into a church, and in the ordination of their officers.

Isa. xl. 20. Cant. viii. 8, 9.

## CHAP. XVI.

Of Synods.\*

1. **SYNODS** orderly assembled, and rightly proceeding according to the pattern, Acts xv. we acknowledge as the ordinance of Christ; and though not absolutely necessary to the being, yet many times, through the iniquity of men, and perverseness of times, necessary to the well-being of churches, for the establishment of truth and peace therein.

Acts, xv. 2—15.

2. Synods being spiritual and ecclesiastical assemblies, are therefore made up of spiritual and ecclesiastical causes. The next efficient cause of them under Christ, is the power of the churches, sending forth their elders and other messengers, who being met together in the name of Christ, are the matter of a synod: and they in arguing, debating, and determining matters of religion according to the word, and publishing the same to the churches it concerneth, do put forth the proper and formal acts of a synod, to the conviction of errors and heresies, and the establishment of truth and peace in the churches, which is the end of a synod.

Acts, xv. 2, 3, 6, 7—23, 31, and xvi. 4, 15.

3. Magistrates have power to call a synod, by calling to the churches to send forth their elders and other messengers, to counsel and assist them in matters of

\* Synods were formerly frequent, but for these many years have been laid aside. Magistrates no longer need the advice of the clergy; and clergymen have enough to do without assembling to afford their counsel.—*Editor*.

religion ; but yet the constituting of a synod is a church act, and may be transacted by the churches, even when civil magistrates may be enemies to churches and to church assemblies.

2 Chron. xxix. 4, 5—11. Acts, xv.

4. It belongeth unto synods and councils, to debate and determine controversies of faith, and cases of conscience ; to clear from the word holy directions for the holy worship of God, and good government of the church ; to bear witness against mal-administration and corruption in doctrine or manners in any particular church, and to give directions for the reformation thereof ; not to exercise church censures in way of discipline, nor any other act of church authority or jurisdiction, which that presidential synod did forbear.

Acts. xv. 1, 2, 6, 7. 1 Chron. xv. 13. 2 Chron. xxix. 6, 7. Acts, xv. 24, 28, 29.

5. The synod's directions and determinations, so far as consonant to the word of God, are to be received with reverence and submission, not only for their agreement therewith (which is the principal ground thereof, and without which they bind not at all) but also secondarily for the power whereby they are made, as being an ordinance of God appointed thereunto in his word.

Acts, xv.

6. Because it is difficult, if not impossible, for many churches to come together in one place, in all their members universally ; therefore they may assemble by their delegates or messengers, as the church at Antioch went not all to Jerusalem, but some select men for that purpose. Because none are or should be more fit to know the state of the churches, nor to advise of ways for the good thereof, than elders ; therefore it is fit that in the choice of the messengers for such assemblies, they have special respect unto such ; yet inasmuch as not only Paul and Barnabas, but certain others also were sent to Jerusalem from Antioch, and when they were come to Jerusalem, not



only the apostles and elders, but other brethren also do assemble and meet about the matter ; therefore synods are to consist both of elders and other church members' endued with gifts and sent by the churches, not excluding the presence of any brethren in the churches.

Acts, xv. 2, 22, 23.

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## CHAP. XVII.

Of the civil magistrate's power in matters ecclesiastical.

1. IT is lawful, profitable, and necessary for christians to gather themselves together into church estate, and therein to exercise all the ordinances of Christ, according unto the word, although the consent of the magistrate could not be had thereunto ; because the apostles and christians in their time did frequently thus practice, when the magistrates being all of them Jewish or Pagan, and most persecuting enemies, would give no countenance or consent to such matters.

Acts, ii. 41, 47, and iv. 1—3.

2. Church government stands in no opposition to civil government of commonwealths, nor any way intrencheth upon the authority of civil magistrates in their jurisdiction ; nor any whit weakeneth their hands in governing, but rather strengtheneth them, and furthereth the people in yielding more hearty and conscionable obedience unto them, whatsoever some ill affected persons to the ways of Christ have suggested, to alienate the affection of kings and princes from the ordinances of Christ ; as if the kingdom of Christ in his church could not rise and stand, without the falling and weakening of their government, which is also of Christ : whereas the contrary is most true, that they may both stand together and flourish, the one being



helpful unto the other, in their distinct and due administrations.

John, xviii. 36. Acts, xxv. 8. Isa. xlix. 23.

3. The power and authority of magistrates is not for the restraining of churches, or any other good works, but for helping in and furthering thereof; and therefore the consent and countenance of magistrates, when it may be had, is not to be slighted, or lightly esteemed; but on the contrary, it is part of that honor due to christian magistrates, to desire and crave their consent and approbation therein; which being obtained, the churches may then proceed in their way with much more encouragement and comfort.

Rom. xiii. 4. 1 Tim. ii. 2.

4. It is not in the power of magistrates to compel their subjects to become church members, and to partake at the Lord's table; for the priests are reprov'd that brought unworthy ones into the sanctuary: then, as it was unlawful for the priest, so it is as unlawful to be done by civil magistrates; those whom the church is to cast out if they were in, the magistrate ought not to thrust them into the church, nor to hold them therein.

Ezek. xliv. 7, 9. 1 Cor. v. 11.

5. As it is unlawful for church officers to meddle with the sword of the magistrate, so it is unlawful for the magistrate to meddle with the work proper to church officers. The acts of Moses and David, who were not only princes, but prophets, were extraordinary, therefore not imitable. Against such usurpation, the Lord witnessed by smiting Uzziah with leprosy, for presuming to offer incense.

Matt. ii. 25, 26. 2. Chron. xxvi. 16, 17.

6. It is the duty of the magistrate to take care of matters of religion, and to improve his civil authority for the observing of the duties commanded in the first, as well as for observing of the duties commanded in the second table. They are called Gods. The end of the magistrate's office, is not only the quiet and

peaceable life of the subject in matters of righteousness and honesty, but also in matters of godliness, yea, of all godliness. Moses, Joshua, David, Solomon, Asa, Jehosaphat, Hezekiah, Josiah, are much commended by the Holy Ghost, for the putting forth their authority in matters of religion: on the contrary, such kings as have been failing this way, are frequently taxed and reproved by the Lord. And not only the kings of Judah, but also Job, Nehemiah, the king of Nineveh, Darius, Artaxerxes, Nebuchadnezzar, whom none looked at as types of Christ, (though were it so, there were no place for any just objection) are commended in the book of God, for exercising their authority this way.

Psalm, lxxii. 8. 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2. 1 Kings, xv. 14, and xxii. 43. 2 Kings, xii. 3, and xiv. 4, and xv. 35. 1 Kings, xx. 42. Job, xxix. 25, and xxxi. 26, 28. Neh. xiii. Jonah, iii. 7. Ezra, vii. Dan. iii. 29.

7. The object of the power of the magistrate are not things merely inward, and so not subject to his cognizance and view, as unbelief, hardness of heart, erroneous opinions not vented, but only such things as are acted by the outward man; neither is their power to be exercised in commanding such acts of the outward man, and punishing the neglect thereof, as are but mere inventions and devices of men, but about such acts as are commanded and forbidden in the word; yea, such as the word doth clearly determine, though not always clearly to the judgment of the magistrate or others, yet clearly in itself. In these he of right ought to put forth his authority, though oft-times actually he doth it not.

1 Kings, xx. 28, 42.

8. Idolatry, blasphemy, heresy, venting corrupt and pernicious opinions, that destroy the foundation, open contempt of the word preached, profanation of the Lord's day, disturbing the peaceable administration and exercise of the worship and holy things of God, and the like, are to be restrained and punished by civil authority.

Deut. xiii. 1 Kings, xx. 28, 42. Dan. iii. 29. Zech. xiii. 3. Neh. xiii. 31. 1 Tim. ii. 2. Rom. xiii. 4.

9. If any church, one or more, shall grow schismatical, rending itself from the communion of other churches, or shall walk incorrigibly or obstinately in any corrupt way of their own, contrary to the rule of the word ; in such case the magistrate is to put forth his coercive power, as the matter shall require.\* The tribes on this side Jordan intended to make war against the other tribes, for building the altar of witness, whom they suspected to have turned away therein from following of the LORD.

Josh. xxii.

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\* The punishing of heretics, and the coercion of schismatical churches, are no longer regarded as within the province of the magistrate. In most respects, this chapter is a very good discussion of a difficult subject.—*Editor*.

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# **CONFESSION OF FAITH,**

Owned and consented unto by the Elders and Messengers of the Churches  
assembled at Boston in New-England,

**MAY 12, 1680.**

**BEING THE SECOND SESSION OF THAT SYNOD.**

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## PREFACE.

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THE Lord Jesus Christ witnessed a good confession, at the time when he said, To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth; and he taketh notice of it, to the praise and high commendation of the church in Pergamos, that they held fast his name, and had not denied his faith. Nor are they worthy of the name of Christians, who, though the Lord by his providence call them publicly to own the truth they have professed, shall nevertheless refuse to declare what they believe, as to those great and fundamental principles in the doctrine of Christ, the knowledge whereof is necessary unto salvation. We find how ready the Apostle was to make a confession of his faith; though for that hope's sake he was accused, and put in chains. And the Martyrs of Jesus, who have laid down their lives in bearing witness to the truth, against the infidelity, idolatry, heresy, apostacy of the world, when Pagan, Arian, or overspread with Popish darkness: Having their feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, were free and forward in their testimony, confessing the truth, yea, sealing it with their blood. With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation, Rom. x. 10. Nor is there a greater evidence of being in a state of salvation, than such a confession, if made in times or places where men are exposed to utmost suffering upon that account. 1 John, iv. 15. And if confession of faith be, in some cases, of such importance and necessity, as hath been expressed; it must needs be in itself, a work pleasing in the sight of God, for his servants to declare unto the world, what those principles of truth are, which they

have received, and are (by the help of Christ) purposed to live and die in the steadfast profession of. Some of the Lord's worthies have been of renown among his people in this respect; especially Iræneus and Athanasius of old, and of latter times Beza, all whose (not to mention others) confessions, with the advantage which the church of God hath received thereby, are famously known.

And it must needs tend much to the honor of the dear and blessed name of the Lord Jesus, in case many churches do join together in their testimony. How signally the Lord hath owned the confession of the four general synods or councils for the suppression of the heresies of those times, needs not to be said, since no man can be ignorant thereof, that hath made it his concern to to be acquainted with things of this nature. The confession of the Bohemians, of the Waldenses, and of the reformed Protestant churches abroad, (which also, to show what harmony in respect of doctrine there is among all sincere professors of the truth, have been published in one volume,) all these have been of singular use, not only to those that lived in the ages when these declarations were emitted, but unto posterity, yea, unto this day.

There have been some who have reflected upon these New English churches for our defect in this matter, as if our principles were unknown; whereas it is well known, that as to matters of doctrine we agree with other reformed churches: nor was it that, but what concerns worship and discipline, that caused our fathers to come into this wilderness, while it was a land not sown, that so they might have liberty to practice accordingly. And it is a ground of holy rejoicing before the Lord, that now there is no advantage left for those that may be disaffected towards us, to object any thing of that nature against us. For it hath pleased the only wise God so to dispose in his providence, as that the elders and messengers of the churches in the colony of the Massachusetts in New England, did, by the call and encouragement of the honored General Court, meet together Sept. 10, 1679. This synod at their second session, which was May 12, 1680, consulted and considered of a Confession of Faith. That which was consented unto by the elders and messengers of the congregational churches in England, who met at

the Savoy (being for the most part, some small variations excepted, the same with that which was agreed upon first by the Assembly at Westminster, and was approved of by the synod at Cambridge in New England, anno 1648, as also by a general assembly in Scotland) was twice publicly read, examined and approved of: that little variation which we have made from the one, in compliance with the other may be seen by those who please to compare them. But we have (for the main) chosen to express ourselves in the words of those reverend assemblies, that so we might not only with one heart, but with one mouth glorify God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

As to what concerns church government, we refer to the Platform of Discipline agreed upon by the messengers of these churches anno 1648, and solemnly owned and confirmed by the late synod.

What hours of temptation may overtake these churches, is not for us to say. Only the Lord doth many times so order things, that when his people have made a good confession, they shall be put upon the trial one way or other, to see whether they have (or who among them hath not) been sincere in what they have done. The Lord grant that the loins of our minds may be so girt about with truth, that we may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

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## CONFESSION OF FAITH.

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### CHAP. I.

Of the Holy Scriptures.

ALTHOUGH the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence, do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom and power of God, as to leave men unexcusable; yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and of his will, which is necessary unto salvation: therefore it pleased the Lord at sundry times, and in divers manners to reveal himself, and to declare that his will unto his church; and afterwards for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan and of the world, to commit the same wholly to writing: which maketh the Holy Scripture to be most necessary; those former ways of God's revealing his will unto his people being now ceased.

II. Under the name of Holy Scripture, or the word of God written, are now contained all the books of the Old and New Testament, which are these:

#### OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra,

Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zachariah, Malachi.

#### OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, the Acts of the Apostles, Paul's Epistle to the Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 to Timothy, 2 to Timothy, to Titus, to Philemon, the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Epistle of James, the first and second Epistles of Peter, the first, second and third Epistles of John, the Epistle of Jude, the Revelation.

All which are given by the inspiration of God to be the rule of faith and life.

III. The books commonly called Apocrypha, not being of divine inspiration, are no part of the canon of the scripture ; and therefore are of no authority in the church of God, nor to be any otherwise approved or made use of, than other human writings.

IV. The authority of the holy scripture, for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man or church, but wholly upon God (who is truth itself) the author thereof ; and therefore it is to be received, because it is the word of God.

V. We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the church, to an high and reverend esteem of the holy scripture. And the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is, to give all glory to God) the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the word of God ; yet



notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the word in our hearts.

VI. The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from scripture; unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit or traditions of men. Nevertheless we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the word: and that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God and government of the church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature, and christian prudence, according to the general rules of the word, which are always to be observed.

VII. All things in scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all: yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded and opened in some place of scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them.

VIII. The Old Testament in Hebrew (which was the native language of the people of God of old) and the New Testament in Greek (which at the time of writing of it was most generally known to the nations) being immediately inspired by God, and by his singular care and providence kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentical; so as in all controversies of religion, the church is finally to appeal unto them. But because these original tongues are not known to all the people of God, who have right unto and interest in the scriptures, and are commanded in the fear of God to

read and search them ; therefore they are to be translated into the vulgar language of every nation unto which they come, that the word of God dwelling plentifully in all, they may worship him in an acceptable manner, and through patience and comfort of the scriptures may have hope.

IX. The infallible rule of interpretation of scripture, is the scripture itself ; and therefore when there is a question about the true and full sense of any scripture (which is not manifold, but one) it must be searched and known by other places, that speak more clearly.

X. The Supreme Judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other, but the holy scripture delivered by the Spirit ; into which scripture so delivered, our Faith is finally resolved.

## CHAP. II.

Of God and of the Holy Trinity.

THERE is but one only living and true God ; who is infinite in being and perfection, a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions, immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, most wise, most holy, most free, most absolute, working all things according to the counsel of his own immutable and most righteous will, for his own glory, most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, the rewarder of them that diligently seek him, and withal, most just and terrible in his judgments, hating all sin, and who will by no means clear the guilty.

II. God hath all life, glory, goodness, blessedness,

in, and of himself, and is alone in, and unto himself, all-sufficient, not standing in need of any creatures which he hath made, nor deriving any glory from them, but only manifesting his own glory in, by, unto and upon them. He is the alone fountain of all being, of whom, through whom, and to whom are all things; and hath most sovereign dominion over them, to do by them, for them, or upon them, whatsoever himself pleaseth: in his sight all things are open and manifest, his knowledge is infinite, infallible and independent upon the creature, so as nothing is to him contingent or uncertain. He is most holy in all his counsels, in all his works, and in all his commands. To him is due from angels and men, and every other creature, whatsoever worship, service or obedience, as creatures, they owe unto the Creator, and whatever he is further pleased to require of them.

III. In the unity of the God-head there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost: the Father is of none, neither begotten, nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son. Which doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation of all our communion with God, and comfortable dependance upon him.

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### CHAP. III.

Of God's eternal Decree.

God from all eternity did by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass: yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.

II. Although God knows whatsoever may or can come to pass upon all supposed conditions, yet hath he not decreed any thing, because he foresaw it as future, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions.

III. By the decree of God for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death.

IV. These angels and men thus predestinated, and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed, and their number is so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished.

V. Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory, out of his mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions or causes moving him thereunto, and all to the praise of his glorious grace.

VI. As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath he by the eternal and most free purpose of his will foreordained all the means thereunto: wherefore they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ, are effectually called unto faith in Christ by his Spirit working in due season, are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by his power, through faith, unto salvation. Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, or effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified and saved, but the elect only.

VII. The rest of mankind God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy, as he pleaseth, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice.

VIII. The doctrine of this high mystery of predestination, is to be handled with special prudence and care, that men attending the will of God revealed in his word, and yielding obedience thereunto, may from the certainty of their effectual vocation, be assured of their eternal election. So shall this doctrine afford matter of praise, reverence and admiration of God, and of humility, diligence, and abundant consolation to all that sincerely obey the gospel.

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## CHAP. IV.

### Of Creation.

It pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for the manifestation of the glory of his eternal power, wisdom and goodness, in the beginning to create or make of nothing the world, and all things therein, whether visible or invisible, in the space of six days, and all very good.

II. After God had made all other creatures, he created man, male and female, with reasonable and immortal souls, endued with knowledge, righteousness and true holiness, after his own image, having the law of God written in their heart, and power to fulfil it; and yet under a possibility of transgressing, being left to the liberty of their own will, which was subject to change. Besides this law written in their hearts, they received a command not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; which while they kept, they were happy in their communion with God, and had dominion over the creatures.

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## CHAP. V.

### Of Providence.

God the great Creator of all things, doth uphold, direct, dispose and govern all creatures, actions and

things, from the greatest even unto the least, by his most wise and holy providence, according to his infallible foreknowledge and the free and immutable counsel of his own will, to the praise of the glory of his wisdom, power, justice, goodness and mercy.

II. Although in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, the first cause, all things come to pass immutably, and infallibly ; yet by the same providence he ordereth them to fall out, according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently.

III. God in his ordinary providence maketh use of means, yet is free to work without, above, and against them at his pleasure.

IV. The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom and the infinite goodness of God, so far manifest themselves in his providence, in that his determinate counsel extendeth itself even to the first fall, and all other sins of angels and men, (and that not by a bare permission,) which also he most wisely and powerfully boundeth, and otherwise ordereth and governeth in a manifold dispensation, to his own most holy ends, yet so as the sinfulness thereof proceedeth only from the creature, and not from God, who being most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin.

V. The most wise, righteous and gracious God doth oftimes leave for a season his own children to manifold temptations, and the corruption of their own hearts, to chastise them for their former sins, or to discover unto them the hidden strength of corruption, and deceitfulness of their hearts, that they may be humbled, and to raise them to a more close and constant dependence for their support upon himself, and to make them more watchful against all future occasions of sin, and for sundry other just and holy ends.

VI. As for those wicked and ungodly men, whom God as a righteous judge for former sins, doth blind and harden, from them he not only withholdeth his



grace, whereby they might have been enlightened in their understandings, and wrought upon in their hearts ; but sometimes also withdraweth the gifts which they had, and exposeth them to such objects as their corruption makes occasions of sin ; and withal gives them over to their own lusts, the temptations of the world, and the power of satan, whereby it comes to pass that they harden themselves, even under those means which God useth for the softening of others.

VII. As the providence of God doth in general reach to all creatures, so after a most special manner it taketh care of his church, and disposeth all things for the good thereof.

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## CHAP. VI.

Of the fall of man, of sin, and of the punishment thereof.

GOD having made a covenant of works and life thereupon, with our first parents, and all their posterity in them, they being seduced by the subtilty and temptation of satan, did wilfully transgress the law of their creation, and break the covenant in eating the forbidden fruit.

II. By this sin they, and we in them, fell from original righteousness and communion with God, and so became dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body.

III. They being the root, and by God's appointment standing in the room and stead of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed, and corrupted nature conveyed to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation.

IV. From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions.

V. This corruption of nature during this life, doth remain in those that are regenerated ; and although it be through Christ pardoned and mortified, yet both itself, and all the motions thereof are truly and properly sin.

VI. Every sin, both original and actual, being a transgression of the righteous law of God, and contrary thereunto, doth in its own nature bring guilt upon the sinner, whereby he is bound over to the wrath of God, and curse of the law, and so made subject to death, with all miseries spiritual, temporal and eternal.

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## CHAP. VII.

Of God's Covenant with Man.

THE distance between God and the creature is so great, that although reasonable creatures do owe obedience to him as their Creator, yet they could never have attained the reward of life, but by some voluntary condescension on God's part, which he hath been pleased to express by way of covenant.

II. The first covenant made with man, was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam, and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience.

III. Man by his fall having made himself incapable of life by that covenant, the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called the covenant of grace ; wherein he freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in him that they may be saved, and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto life, his Holy Spirit to make them willing and able to believe.

IV. This covenant of grace is frequently set forth in scripture by the name of a Testament, in reference to the death of Jesus Christ the testator, and to the

everlasting inheritance, with all things belonging to it, therein bequeathed.

V. Although this covenant hath been differently and variously administered in respect of ordinances and institutions in the time of the law, and since the coming of Christ in the flesh ; yet for the substance and efficacy of it, to all its spiritual and saving ends, it is one and the same ; upon the account of which various dispensations, it is called the Old and New Testament.

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## CHAP. VIII.

### Of Christ the Mediator.

IT pleased God in his eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus his only begotten Son, according to a covenant made between them both, to be the mediator between God and man : the prophet, priest, and king, the head and saviour of his church, the heir of all things, and judge of the world : unto whom he did from all eternity give a people to be his seed, and to be by him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified and glorified.

II. The Son of God, the second person in the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance, and equal with the Father, did, when the fulness of time was come, take upon him man's nature, with all the essential properties and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin, being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the virgin Mary, of her substance : so that two whole perfect and distinct natures, the God-head and the man-hood, were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion ; which person is very God and very man, yet one Christ, the only mediator between God and man.

III. The Lord Jesus in his human nature, thus united to the divine in the person of the Son, was sanctified and anointed with the Holy Spirit above measure, having in him all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, in whom it pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell, to the end that being holy, harmless, undefiled, and full of grace and truth, he might be thoroughly furnished to execute the office of a mediator and surety ; which office he took not unto himself, but was thereunto called by his Father, who also put all power and judgment into his hand, and gave him commandment to execute the same.

IV. This office the Lord Jesus Christ did most willingly undertake ; which that he might discharge, he was made under the law, and did perfectly fulfil it, and underwent the punishment due to us, which we should have borne and suffered, being made sin and a curse for us, enduring most grievous torments immediately from God in his soul, and most painful sufferings in his body, was crucified, and died, was buried and remained under the power of death, yet saw no corruption, on the third day he arose from the dead with the same body in which he suffered, with which also he ascended into heaven, and there sitteth at the right hand of his Father, making intercession, and shall return to judge men and angels at the end of the world.

V. The Lord Jesus by his perfect obedience and sacrifice of himself, which he through the eternal Spirit once offered up unto God, hath fully satisfied the justice of God, and purchased not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, for all those whom the Father hath given unto him.

VI. Although the work of redemption was not actually wrought by Christ till after his incarnation, yet the virtue, efficacy and benefits thereof were communicated to the elect in all ages successively from the beginning of the world, in and by those promises, types and sacrifices, wherein he was revealed and signified

to be the seed of the woman, which should bruise the serpent's head, and the lamb slain from the beginning of the world, being yesterday and to-day the same, and forever.

VII. Christ in the work of mediation acteth according to both natures, by each nature doing that which is proper to itself; yet by reason of the unity of the person, that which is proper to one nature, is sometimes in scripture attributed to the person denominated by the other nature.

VIII. To all those for whom Christ hath purchased redemption, he doth certainly and effectually apply and communicate the same, making intercession for them, and revealing unto them in and by the word, the mysteries of salvation, effectually persuading them by his Spirit to believe and obey, and governing their hearts by his word and Spirit, overcoming all their enemies by his almighty power and wisdom, in such manner and ways as are most consonant to his wonderful and unsearchable dispensation.

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## CHAP. IX.

### Of Free-will.

God hath endued the will of man with that natural liberty and power of acting upon choice, that it is neither forced, nor by any absolute necessity of nature determined to do good or evil.

II. Man in his state of innocency had freedom and power to will and to do that which was good and well pleasing to God; but yet mutably, so that he might fall from it.

III. Man by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation, so as a natural man being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able by his own

strength to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto.

IV. When God converts a sinner, and translates him into the state of grace, he freeth him from his natural bondage under sin, and by his grace alone enables him freely to will and to do that which is spiritually good ; yet so, as that by reason of his remaining corruption, he doth not perfectly nor only will that which is good, but doth also will that which is evil.

V. The will of man is made perfectly and immutably free to good alone in the state of glory only.

## CHAP. X.

### Of Effectual Calling.

ALL those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, he is pleased in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call by his word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ, enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God, taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them an heart of flesh, renewing their wills, and by his almighty power determining them to that which is good, and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ : Yet so, as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace.

II. This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not from any thing at all foreseen in man, who is altogether passive therein, until being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it.

III. Elect infants dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ, who worketh when, and where, and how he pleaseth : so also are all other elect per-



sons, who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the word.

IV. Others not elected, although they may be called by the ministry of the word, and may have some common operations of the Spirit, yet not being effectually drawn by the Father, they neither do nor can come unto Christ, and therefore cannot be saved; much less can men not professing the Christian religion, be saved in any other way whatsoever, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature, and the law of that religion they do profess: and to assert and maintain that they may, is very pernicious, and to be detested.

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## CHAP. XI.

### Of Justification.

THOSE whom God effectually calleth, he also freely justifieth, not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous, not for any thing wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone; nor by imputing Faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them, as their righteousness, but by imputing Christ's active obedience unto the whole law, and passive obedience in his sufferings and death, for their whole and sole righteousness, they receiving and resting on him and his righteousness by Faith; which Faith they have not of themselves, it is the gift of God.

II. Faith thus receiving and resting on Christ, and his righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification; yet it is not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead Faith, but worketh by love.

III. Christ by his obedience and death did fully dis-

charge the debt of all those that are justified, and did by the sacrifice of himself, in the blood of his cross, undergoing in their stead the penalty due unto them, make a proper, real, and full satisfaction to God's justice in their behalf: yet inasmuch as he was given by the Father for them, and his obedience and satisfaction accepted in their stead, and both freely, not for any thing in them, their justification is only of free grace, that both the exact justice and rich grace of God might be glorified in the justification of sinners.

IV. God did from all eternity decree to justify all the elect, and Christ did in the fulness of time die for their sins, and rise again for their justification: nevertheless, they are not justified personally, until the Holy Spirit doth in due time actually apply Christ unto them.

V. God doth continue to forgive the sins of those that are justified; and although they can never fall from the state of justification, yet they may by their sins fall under God's fatherly displeasure: and in that condition they have not usually the light of his countenance restored unto them, until they humble themselves, confess their sins, beg pardon, and renew their Faith and repentance.

VI. The justification of believers under the old Testament, was in all these respects one and the same with the justification of believers under the New Testament.

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## CHAP. XII.

### Of Adoption.

ALL those that are justified, God vouchsafeth in and for his only Son Jesus Christ to make partakers of the grace of adoption, by which they are taken into the number, and enjoy the liberties and privileges of the children of God, have his name put upon them, receive the spirit of adoption, have access to the throne of grace with boldness, are enabled to cry Abba Fa-

ther, are pitied, protected, provided for, and chastened by him as by a Father, yet never cast off, but sealed to the day of redemption, and inherit the promises as heirs of everlasting salvation.

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## CHAP. XIII.

### Of Sanctification.

THEY that are effectually called and regenerated, being united to Christ, having a new heart, and a new spirit created in them, through the virtue of Christ's death and resurrection, are also further sanctified really and personally through the same virtue, by his word and Spirit dwelling in them, the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, and the several lusts thereof are more and more weakened and mortified, and they more and more quickened and strengthened in all saving graces, to the practice of all true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

II. This sanctification is throughout in the whole man, yet imperfect in this life, there abide still some remnants of corruption in every part, whence ariseth a continual and irreconcilable war, the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh.

III. In which war, although the remaining corruption for a time may much prevail, yet through the continual supply of strength from the sanctifying Spirit of Christ, the regenerate part doth overcome, and so the saints grow in grace, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

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## CHAP. XIV.

### Of Saving Faith.

THE grace of Faith, whereby the elect are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls, is the work of

the Spirit of Christ in their hearts, and is ordinarily wrought by the ministry of the word ; by which also, and by the administration of the seals, prayer, and other means, it is increased and strengthened.

II. By this Faith a Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the word, for the authority of God himself speaking therein, and acteth differently upon that which each particular passage thereof containeth, yielding obedience to the commands, trembling at the threatnings, and embracing the promises of God for this life, and that which is to come. But the principal acts of saving Faith are, accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone, for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace.

III. This Faith, although it be different in degrees, and may be weak or strong, yet it is in the least degree of it different in the kind or nature of it (as is all other saving grace) from the Faith and common grace of temporary believers ; and therefore, though it may be many times assailed and weakened, yet it gets the victory, growing up in many to the attainment of a full assurance through Christ, who is both the author and finisher of our Faith.

## CHAP. XV.

### Of Repentance unto Life and Salvation.

SUCH of the elect as are converted at riper years, having sometime lived in the state of nature, and therein served divers lusts and pleasures, God in their effectual calling giveth them repentance unto life.

II. Whereas there is none that doth good, and sinneth not, and the best of men may through the power and deceitfulness of their corruptions dwelling in them, with the prevalency of temptation, fall into great sins and provocations ; God hath in the covenant of grace

mercifully provided, that believers so sinning and falling, be renewed through repentance unto salvation.

III. This saving repentance is an evangelical grace, whereby a person being by the Holy Ghost made sensible of the manifold evils of his sin, doth by Faith in Christ humble himself for it with godly sorrow, detestation of it, and self abhorrency, praying for pardon and strength of grace, with a purpose and endeavor by supplies of the Spirit, to walk before God unto all well-pleasing in all things.

IV. As repentance is to be continued through the whole course of our lives, upon the account of the body of death, and the motions thereof; so it is every man's duty to repent of his particular known sins, particularly.

V. Such is the provision which God hath made through Christ in the covenant of grace, for the preservation of believers unto salvation, that although there is no sin so small, but it deserves damnation yet there is no sin so great, that it shall bring damnation, on them who truly repent; which makes the constant preaching of repentance necessary.

## CHAP. XVI.

### Of Good Works.

Good works are only such as God hath commanded in his holy word, and not such as without the warrant thereof are devised by men out of blind zeal, or upon any pretence of good intentions.

II. These good works done in obedience to God's commandments, are the fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith, and by them believers manifest their thankfulness, strengthen their assurance, edify their brethren, adorn the profession of the gospel, stop the mouths of the adversaries, and glorify God, whose workmanship they are, created in Christ Jesus there-



unto, that having their fruit unto holiness, they may have the end eternal life.

III. Their ability to do good works is not at all of themselves, but wholly from the Spirit of Christ : and that they may be enabled thereunto, besides the graces they have already received, there is required an actual influence of the same Holy Spirit to work in them to will and to do, of his good pleasure ; yet are they not hereupon to grow negligent, as if they were not bound to perform any duty, unless upon a special motion of the Spirit, but they ought to be diligent in stirring up the grace of God that is in them.

IV. They who in their obedience attain to the greatest height which is possible in this life, are so far from being able to supererogate, and to do more than God requires, as that they fall short of much, which in duty they are bound to do.

V. We cannot by our best works merit pardon of sin, or eternal life at the hand of God, by reason of the great disproportion that is between them, and the glory to come ; and the infinite distance that is between us, and God, whom by them we can neither profit, nor satisfy for the debt of our former sin ; but when we have done all we can, we have done but our duty, and are unprofitable servants ; and because as they are good, they proceed from his Spirit, and as they are wrought by us, they are defiled and mixed with so much weakness and imperfection, that they cannot endure the severity of God's judgment.

VI. Yet notwithstanding, the persons of believers being accepted through Christ, their good works also are accepted in him, not as though they were in this life wholly unblameable and unreproveable in God's sight, but that he looking upon them in his Son is pleased to accept and reward that which is sincere, although accompanied with many weaknesses and imperfections.

VII. Works done by unregenerate men, although for the matter of them, they may be things which God



commands, and of good use both to themselves and to others ; yet because they proceed not from an heart purified by Faith, nor are done in a right manner, according to the word, nor to a right end, the glory of God ; they are therefore sinful, and cannot please God, nor make a man meet to receive grace from God ; and yet their neglect of them is more sinful and displeasing to God.

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## CHAP. XVII.

*Of the Perseverance of the Saints.*

**THEY**, whom God hath accepted in his Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by his Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved.

II. This perseverance of the saints depends not upon their own free-will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election, from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father, upon the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ, and union with him, the oath of God, the abiding of his Spirit, and the seed of God within them, and the nature of the covenant of grace, from all which ariseth also the certainty and infallibility thereof.

III. And though they may through the temptation of satan, and of the world, the prevalency of corruption remaining in them, and the neglect of the means of their preservation, fall into grievous sins, and for a time continue therein, whereby they incur God's displeasure, and grieve his Holy Spirit, come to have their graces and comforts impaired, have their hearts hardened, and their consciences wounded, hurt and scandalize others, and bring temporal judgments upon themselves ; yet they are and shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

## CHAP. XVIII.

Of the Assurance of Grace and Salvation.

ALTHOUGH temporary believers, and other unregenerate men may vainly deceive themselves with false hopes and carnal presumptions of being in the favor of God, and state of salvation, which hope of theirs shall perish, yet such as truly believe in the Lord Jesus, and love him in sincerity, endeavoring to walk in all good conscience before him, may in this life be certainly assured that they are in the state of grace, and may rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, which hope shall never make them ashamed.

II. This certainty is not a bare conjectural and probable persuasion, grounded upon a fallible hope, but an infallible assurance of Faith, founded on the blood and righteousness of Christ, revealed in the gospel, and also upon the inward evidence of those graces, unto which promises are made, and on the immediate witness of the Spirit, testifying our adoption, and as a fruit thereof, leaving the heart more humble and holy.

III. This infallible assurance doth not so belong to the essence of Faith, but that a true believer may wait long, and conflict with many difficulties before he be partaker of it; yet being enabled by the Spirit to know the things which are freely given him of God, he may without extraordinary revelation, in the right use of ordinary means attain thereunto: and therefore it is the duty of every one to give all diligence to make his calling and election sure, that thereby his heart may be enlarged in peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, in love and thankfulness to God, and in strength and cheerfulness in the duties of obedience, the proper fruits of this assurance; so far is it from inclining men to looseness.

IV. True believers may have the assurance of their salvation divers ways shaken, diminished and intermitted, as by negligence in preserving of it, by falling

into some special sin, which woundeth the conscience, and grieveth the Spirit, by some sudden or vehement temptation, by God's withdrawing the light of his countenance, suffering even such as fear him to walk in darkness, and to have no light ; yet are they neither utterly destitute of that seed of God, and life of Faith, that love of Christ and the brethren, that sincerity of heart and conscience of duty, out of which by the operation of the Spirit, this assurance may in due time be revived, and by the which in the mean time they are supported from utter despair.

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## CHAP. XIX.

Of the Law of God.

GOD gave to Adam a law of universal obedience written in his heart, and a particular precept of not eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, as a covenant of works, by which he bound him and all his posterity to personal, entire, exact and perpetual obedience, promised life upon the fulfilling, and threatened death upon the breach of it, and endued him with power and ability to keep it.

II. This law so written in the heart, continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness after the fall of man, and was delivered by God on mount Sinai in ten commandments, and written in two tables ; the four first commandments containing our duty towards God, and the other six our duty to man.

III. Beside this law commonly called moral, God was pleased to give to the people of Israel, as a church under age, ceremonial laws, containing several typical ordinances, partly of worship, prefiguring Christ, his graces, actions, sufferings and benefits, and partly holding forth divers instructions of moral duties : all which

ceremonial laws being appointed only to the time of reformation, are by Jesus Christ the true Messiah and only lawgiver, who was furnished with power from the Father for that end, abrogated and taken away.

IV. To them also he gave sundry judicial laws, which expired together with the state of that people, not obliging any now by virtue of that institution, their general equity only being still of moral use.

V. The moral law doth forever bind all, as well justified persons as others, to the obedience thereof; and that not only in regard of the matter contained in it, but also in respect of the authority of God the creator, who gave it : neither doth Christ in the gospel any way dissolve, but much strengthen this obligation.

VI. Although true believers be not under the law, as a covenant of works, to be thereby justified or condemned, yet it is of great use to them as well as to others, in that, as a rule of life, informing them of the will of God, and their duty, and directs and binds them to walk accordingly, discovering also the sinful pollutions of their nature, hearts and lives, so as examining themselves thereby, they may come to further conviction of, humiliation for, and hatred against sin, together with a clearer sight of the need they have of Christ, and the perfection of his obedience. It is likewise of use to the regenerate, to restrain their corruptions, in that it forbids sin, and the threatnings of it serve to show what even their sins deserve, and what afflictions in this life they may expect for them, although freed from the curse thereof threatened in the law. The promises of it in like manner show them God's approbation of obedience, and what blessings they may expect upon the performance thereof, although not as due to them by the law, as a covenant of works ; so as a man's doing good, and refraining from evil, because the law encourageth to the one, and deterreth from the other, is no evidence of his being under the law, and not under grace.

VII. Neither are the fore-mentioned uses of the law contrary to the grace of the gospel, but do sweetly comply with it, the Spirit of Christ subduing and enabling the will of man to do that freely and cheerfully, which the will of God revealed in the law required to be done.

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## CHAP. XX.

Of the Gospel, and of the extent of the Grace thereof.

THE covenant of works being broken by sin, and made unprofitable unto life, God was pleased to give unto the elect the promise of Christ, the seed of the woman, as the means of calling them, and begetting in them faith and repentance. In this promise, the gospel, as to the substance of it, was revealed, and was therein effectual for the conversion and salvation of sinners.

II. This promise of Christ, and salvation by him, is revealed only in and by the word of God ; neither do the works of creation or providence, with the light of nature, make discovery of Christ, or of grace by him, so much as in a general or obscure way ; much less that men destitute of the revelation of him by the promise or gospel, should be enabled thereby to attain saving Faith or repentance.

III. The revelation of the gospel unto sinners made in divers times, and by sundry parts, with the addition of promises and precepts for the obedience required therein, as to the nations and persons to whom it is granted, is merely of the sovereign will and good pleasure of God, not being annexed by virtue of any promise to the due improvement of men's natural abilities, by virtue of common light received without it, which none ever did make, or can so do : And therefore in all ages



the preaching of the gospel hath been granted unto persons and nations, as to the extent or straitening of it, in great variety, according to the counsel of the will of God.

IV. Although the gospel be the only outward means of revealing Christ and saving grace, and is, as such, abundantly sufficient thereunto ; yet that men who are dead in trespasses, may be born again, quickened or regenerated, there is moreover necessary an effectual, irresistible work of the Holy Ghost upon the whole soul, for the producing in them a new spiritual life, without which no other means are sufficient for their conversion unto God.

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## CHAP. XXI.

Of Christian Liberty, and Liberty of Conscience.

THE liberty which Christ hath purchased for believers under the gospel, consists in their freedom from the guilt of sin, the condemning wrath of God, the rigor and curse of the law, and in their being delivered from this present evil world, bondage to satan, and dominion of sin, from the evil of afflictions, the fear and sting of death, the victory of the grave, and everlasting damnation ; as also in their free access to God, and their yielding obedience unto him, not out of slavish fear, but a child-like love and willing mind : all which were common also to believers under the law, for the substance of them, but under the New Testament the liberty of Christians is further enlarged in their freedom from the yoke of the ceremonial law, the whole legal administration of the covenant of grace, to which the Jewish church was subjected, and in greater boldness of access to the throne of grace, and in fuller communications of the free Spirit of God, than believers under the law did ordinarily partake of.



II. God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are in any thing contrary to his word, or not contained in it; so that to believe such doctrines, or to obey such commands out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience, and the requiring of an implicit Faith, and an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience, and reason also.

III. They who upon pretence of Christian liberty do practice any sin, or cherish any lust, as they do thereby pervert the main design of the grace of the gospel to their own destruction, so they wholly destroy the end of Christian liberty, which is, that being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, we might serve the Lord without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.

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## CHAP. XXII.

Of Religious Worship, and of the Sabbath-day.

THE light of nature showeth that there is a God, who hath Lordship and sovereignty over all, is just, good, and doth good unto all, and is therefore to be feared, loved, praised, called upon, trusted in, and served with all the heart, and all the soul, and with all the might; but the acceptable way of worshipping the true God, is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of satan, under any visible representations, or any other way not prescribed in the holy Scriptures.

II. Religious worship is to be given to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and to him alone; not to angels, saints, or any other creature; and since the fall, not without a mediator, nor in the mediation of any other but of Christ alone.

III. Prayer with thanksgiving, being one special part of natural worship, is by God required of all men ; but that it may be accepted, it is to be made in the name of the Son, by the help of his Spirit, according to his will, with understanding, reverence, humility, fervency, faith, love, and perseverance : and when with others, in a known tongue.

IV. Prayer is to be made for things lawful, and for all sorts of men living, or that shall live hereafter, but not for the dead, nor for those of whom it may be known that they have sinned the sin unto death.

V. The reading of the Scriptures, preaching and hearing of the word of God, singing of psalms, as also the administration of baptism and the Lord's supper, are all parts of religious worship of God, to be performed in obedience unto God, with understanding, faith, reverence and godly fear. Solemn humiliations with fastings, and thanksgiving upon special occasions, are in their several times and seasons to be used in an holy and religious manner.

VI. Neither prayer nor any other part of religious worship, is now under the gospel either tied unto, or made more acceptable by any place in which it is performed, or towards which it is directed : but God is to be worshipped every where in spirit and in truth, as in private families daily, and in secret each one by himself, so more solemnly in the public assemblies, which are not carelessly nor wilfully to be neglected, or forsaken, when God by his word or providence calleth thereunto.

VII. As it is of the law of nature, that in general a proportion of time by God's appointment be set apart for the worship of God ; so by his word in a positive, moral and perpetual commandment, binding all men in all ages, he hath particularly appointed one day in seven for a Sabbath to be kept holy unto him, which from the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, was the last day of the week, and from the res-

urrection of Christ, was changed into the first day of the week, which in scripture is called the Lord's day, and is to be continued to the end of the world as the Christian Sabbath, the observation of the last day of the week being abolished.

VIII. This Sabbath is then kept holy unto the Lord, when men after a due preparing of their hearts, and ordering their common affairs beforehand, do not only observe an holy rest all the day from their own works, words, and thoughts about their worldly employments and recreations, but also are taken up the whole time in the public and private exercises of his worship, and in the duties of necessity and mercy.

## CHAP. XXIII.

### Of Lawful Oaths and Vows.

A **LAWFUL** oath is a part of religious worship, wherein the person swearing in truth, righteousness and judgment, solemnly calleth God to witness what he asserteth or promiseth, and to judge him according to the truth or falsehood of what he sweareth.

II. The name of God only is that by which men ought to swear, and therein it is to be used with all holy fear and reverence : therefore to swear vainly or rashly by that glorious and dreadful name, or to swear at all by any other thing, is sinful, and to be abhorred : yet as in matters of weight and moment an oath is warranted by the word of God, under the New Testament, as well as under the old ; so a lawful oath, being imposed by lawful authority in such matters, ought to be taken.

III. Whosoever taketh an oath warranted by the word of God, ought duly to consider the weightiness of so solemn an act, and therein to avouch nothing but what he is fully persuaded is the truth : neither may

any man bind himself by oath to any thing, but what is good and just, and what he believeth so to be, and what he is able and resolved to perform. Yet it is a sin to refuse an oath touching any thing that is good and just, being lawfully imposed by authority.

IV. An oath is to be taken in the plain and common sense of the words, without equivocation, or mental reservation : It cannot oblige to sin, but in any thing not sinful being taken, it binds to performance, although to a man's own hurt ; nor is it to be violated, although made to heretics or infidels.

V. A vow, which is not to be made to any creature, but God alone, is of the like nature with a promissory oath, and ought to be made with the like religious care, and to be performed with the like faithfulness.

VI. Popish monastical vows of perpetual single life, professed poverty, and regular obedience, are so far from being degrees of higher perfection, that they are superstitious and sinful snares, in which no Christian may entangle himself.

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## CHAP. XXIV.

### Of the Civil Magistrate.

GOD the supreme Lord and King, of all the world, hath ordained civil magistrates to be under him, over the people for his own glory and the public good ; and to this end hath armed them with the power of the sword, for the defence and encouragement of them that do good, and for the punishment of evil doers.

II. It is lawful for Christians to accept and execute the office of a magistrate, when called thereunto : In the management whereof, as they ought especially to maintain piety, justice and peace, according to the wholesome laws of each commonwealth, so for that end they may lawfully now under the New Testament wage war upon just and necessary occasion.

III. They, who upon pretence of Christian liberty shall oppose any lawful power, or the lawful exercises of it, resist the ordinance of God, and for their publishing of such opinions, or maintaining of such practices as are contrary to the light of nature, or to the known principles of Christianity, whether concerning faith, worship or conversation, or to the power of godliness, or such erroneous opinions or practices, as either in their own nature, or in the manner of publishing or maintaining them, are destructive to the external peace and order which Christ hath established in the church, they may lawfully be called to account, and proceeded against by the censures of the church, and by the power of the civil magistrate; yet in such differences about the doctrines of the gospel, or ways of the worship of God, as may befall men exercising a good conscience, manifesting it in their conversation, and holding the foundation, and duly observing the rules of peace and order, there is no warrant for the magistrate to abridge them of their liberty.

IV. It is the duty of people to pray for magistrates, to honor their persons, to pay them tribute and other dues, to obey their lawful commands, and to be subject to their authority for conscience sake. Infidelity, or difference in religion, doth not make void the magistrates' just and legal authority, nor free the people from their due obedience to him: from which ecclesiastical persons are not exempted, much less hath the Pope any power or jurisdiction over them in their dominions, or over any of their people, and least of all to deprive them of their dominions or lives, if he shall judge them to be heretics, or upon any other pretence whatsoever.

## CHAP. XXV.

## Of Marriage.

MARRIAGE is to be between one man and one woman : neither is it lawful for any man to have more than one wife, nor for any woman to have more than one husband at the same time.

II. Marriage was ordained for the mutual help of husband and wife, for the increase of mankind with a legitimate issue, and of the church with an holy seed, and for preventing of uncleanness.

III. It is lawful for all sorts of people to marry, who are able with judgment to give their consent. Yet it is the duty of Christians to marry in the Lord, and therefore such as profess the true reformed religion, should not marry with Infidels, Papists, or other Idolaters : neither should such as are godly, be unequally yoked by marrying such as are wicked in their life, or maintain damnable heresy.

IV. Marriage ought not to be within the degrees of consanguinity or affinity forbidden in the word, nor can such incestuous marriages ever be made lawful by any law of man, or consent of parties, so as those persons may live together as man and wife.

## CHAP. XXVI.

## Of the Church.

THE Catholic or Universal church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one under Christ the head thereof, and is the spouse, the body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

II. The whole body of men throughout the world, professing the faith of the gospel, and obedience unto



God by Christ according unto it, not destroying their own profession by any errors everting the foundation, or unholiness of conversation, they and their children with them are, and may be called the visible Catholic church of Christ, although as such it is not intrusted with any officers to rule or govern over the whole body.

III. The purest churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error, and some have so degenerated as to become no churches of Christ, but synagogues of satan : nevertheless Christ always hath had, and ever shall have a visible kingdom in this world, to the end thereof, of such as believe in him, and make profession of his name.

IV. There is no other head of the church but the Lord Jesus Christ, nor can the Pope of Rome in any sense be head thereof, but is that antichrist, that man of sin, and son of perdition, that exalteth himself in the church against Christ, and all that is called God, whom the Lord shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.

V. As the Lord in his care and love towards his church, hath in his infinite wise providence, exercised it with great variety in all ages for the good of them that love him, and his own glory ; so according to his promise, we expect that in the latter days, antichrist being destroyed, the Jews called, and the adversaries of the kingdom of his dear Son broken, the churches of Christ being enlarged and edified, through a free and plentiful communication of light and grace, shall enjoy in this world a more quiet, peaceable and glorious condition, than they have enjoyed.

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## CHAP. XXVII.

## Of the Communion of Saints.

ALL Saints that are united to Jesus Christ their head by his Spirit and faith, although they are not made thereby one person with him, have fellowship in his graces, sufferings, death, resurrection and glory : and being united to one another in love, they have communion in each others gifts and graces, and are obliged to the performance of such duties, public and private, as do conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man.

II. All Saints are bound to maintain an holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God, and in performing such other spiritual services as tend to their mutual edification : as also in relieving each other in outward things, according to their several abilities and necessities : which communion, though especially to be exercised by them in the relations wherein they stand, whether in families or churches, yet as God offereth opportunity, is to be extended unto all those who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus.

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## CHAP. XXVIII.

## Of the Sacraments.

SACRAMENTS are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace, immediately instituted by Christ, to represent him and his benefits, and to confirm our interest in him, and solemnly to engage us to the service of God, in Christ, according to his word.

II. There is in every sacrament a spiritual relation, or sacramental union between the sign and the thing signified ; whence it comes to pass, that the names and effects of the one are attributed to the other.

III. The grace which is exhibited in or by the sacraments rightly used, is not conferred by any power in them, neither doth the efficacy of a sacrament depend upon the piety or intention of him that doth administer it, but upon the work of the Spirit, and the word of institution, which contains together with a precept authorizing the use thereof, a promise of benefit to worthy receivers.

IV. There be only two sacraments ordained by Christ our Lord in the gospel, that is to say, baptism and the Lord's supper ; neither of which may be dispensed by any but by a minister of the word lawfully called.

V. The sacraments of the Old Testament, in regard of the spiritual things thereby signified and exhibited, were for substance the same with those of the New.

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## CHAP. XXIX.

### Of Baptism.

BAPTISM is a sacrament of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, to be unto the party baptized a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, of his ingrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins, and of his giving up unto God through Jesus Christ, to walk in newness of life ; which ordinance is by Christ's own appointment to be continued in his church, until the end of the world.

II. The outward element to be used in this ordinance is water, wherewith the party is to be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, by a minister of the gospel lawfully called thereunto.

III. Dipping of the person into the water is not necessary, but baptism is rightly administered by pouring or sprinkling water upon the person.

IV. Not only those that do actually profess Faith in, and obedience unto Christ, but also the infants of one or both believing parents are to be baptized, and those only.

V. Although it be a great sin to condemn or neglect this ordinance, yet grace and salvation are not so inseparably annexed to it, as that no person can be regenerated or saved without it; or that all that are baptized are undoubtedly regenerated.

VI. The efficacy of baptism is not tied to that moment of time wherein it is administered, yet notwithstanding, by the right use of this ordinance, the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited and conferred by the Holy Ghost to such (whether of age or infants) as that grace belongeth unto, according to the counsel of God's own will in his appointed time.

VII. Baptism is but once to be administered to any person.

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## CHAP. XXX.

### Of the Lord's Supper.

OUR Lord Jesus in the night wherein he was betrayed, instituted the sacrament of his body and blood, called the Lord's supper, to be observed in his churches to the end of the world, for the perpetual remembrance, and showing forth of the sacrifice of himself in his death, the sealing of all benefits thereof unto true believers, their spiritual nourishment and growth in him, their further engagement in and to all duties which they owe unto him, and to be a bond and pledge of their communion with him, and with each other.

II. In this sacrament Christ is not offered up to his Father, nor any real sacrifice made at all for remission of sin of the quick or dead, but only a memorial of that one offering up of himself upon the cross once for all, and a spiritual oblation of all possible praise unto

God for the same ; so that the Popish sacrifice of the mass (as they call it) is most abominable injurious to Christ's own only sacrifice, the alone propitiation for all the sins of the elect.

III. The Lord Jesus hath in this ordinance appointed his ministers to declare his word of institution to the people, to pray and bless the elements of bread and wine, and thereby to set them apart from a common to an holy use, and to take and break the bread, to take the cup, and (they communicating also themselves) to give both to the communicants, but to none who are not then present in the congregation.

IV. Private masses, or receiving the sacrament by a priest, or any other alone, as likewise the denial of the cup to the people, worshipping the elements, the lifting them up, or carrying them about for adoration, and the reserving them for any pretended religious use, are all contrary to the nature of this sacrament, and to the institution of Christ.

V. The outward elements in this sacrament duly set apart to the uses ordained by Christ, have such relation to him crucified, as that truly, yet sacramentally only, they are sometimes called by the name of the things they represent, to wit, the body and blood of Christ ; albeit in substance and nature they still remain truly and only bread and wine as they were before.

VI. That doctrine which maintains a change of the substance of bread and wine, into the substance of Christ's body and blood (commonly called transubstantiation) by consecration of a priest, or by any other way, is repugnant not to the scriptures alone, but even to common sense and reason, overthroweth the nature of the sacrament, and hath been, and is the cause of manifold superstitions, yea, of gross idolatries.

VII. Worthy receivers outwardly partaking of the visible elements in this sacrament, do then also inwardly by Faith, really and indeed, yet not carnally and corporally, but spiritually, receive and feed upon Christ

crucified, and all benefits of his death; the body and blood of Christ being then not corporally or carnally in, with, or under the bread and wine, yet as really, but spiritually present to the Faith of believers in that ordinance, as the elements themselves are to their outward senses.

VIII. All ignorant and ungodly persons, as they are unfit to enjoy communion with Christ, so are they unworthy of the Lord's table, and cannot without great sin against him, whilst they remain such, partake of these holy mysteries, or be admitted thereunto; yea, whosoever shall receive unworthily, are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, eating and drinking judgment to themselves.

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## CHAP. XXXI.

Of the state of Man after Death, and of the Resurrection of the Dead.

THE bodies of men after death return to dust, and see corruption; but their souls (which neither die nor sleep) having an immortal substance, immediately return to God who gave them, the souls of the righteous being then made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies: and the souls of the wicked are cast into hell, where they remain in torment and utter darkness, reserved to the judgment of the great day: besides these two places of souls separated from their bodies, the scripture acknowledgeth none.

II. At the last day such as are found alive shall not die, but be changed, and all the dead shall be raised up with the self same bodies, and none other, although with different qualities, which shall be united again to their souls forever.

III. The bodies of the unjust shall by the power of Christ be raised to dishonor; the bodies of the just by



his Spirit unto honor, and be made conformable to his own glorious body.

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## CHAP. XXXII.

Of the Last Judgment.

GOD hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ, to whom all power and judgment is given by the Father : in which day, not only the apostate Angels shall be judged, but likewise all persons that have lived upon earth, shall appear before the tribunal of Christ, to give an account of their thoughts, words and deeds, and to receive according to what they have done in the body, whether good or evil.

II. The end of God's appointing this day, is for the manifestation of the glory of his mercy in the eternal salvation of the elect, and of his justice in the damnation of the reprobate, who are wicked and disobedient : for then shall the righteous go into everlasting life, and receive that fulness of joy and glory, with everlasting reward in the presence of the Lord, but the wicked, who know not God, and obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ, shall be cast into eternal torments, and be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.

III. As Christ would have us to be certainly persuaded that there shall be a judgment, both to deter all men from sin, and for the greater consolation of the godly in their adversity ; so will he have that day unknown to men, that they may shake off all carnal security, and be always watchful, because they know not at what hour the Lord will come, and may be ever prepared to say, *Come Lord Jesus, come quickly.* Amen.



CONSTITUTION  
OF THE  
CHURCHES OF CONNECTICUT,  
COMMONLY CALLED  
**THE SAYBROOK PLATFORM.**

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THE churches of Connecticut were represented in the general synod at Cambridge, in 1648, and adopted the Platform of Discipline there recommended. According to this rule they professed to walk, for the next sixty years. Many, however, were not entirely satisfied with the Cambridge Platform, as it "made no provision for the general meeting of ministers, or for their union in associations, or in consociations." Some closer bond of union among churches and ministers seems to have been early and generally desired. In 1668, an act passed the legislature of the colony, authorising several of the ministers to meet at Saybrook, to devise some general plan of church communion and discipline. "This appears to have been the first step, towards forming a religious constitution." In 1703, there was a general synod of the churches in the colony, to give their consent to a Confession of Faith. After examining and adopting the Westminster and Savoy Confessions, "they also drew up certain rules of ecclesiastical union in discipline, as preparatory to another general synod which they had in contemplation. In May, 1708, the legislature passed an act, requiring the ministers and churches to meet and form an ecclesiastical constitution. The apprehensions and wishes of the assembly will, in

the best manner, be discovered by their own act, which is in the words following :

“ This assembly, from their own observation, and the complaint of many others, being made sensible of the defects of the discipline of the churches of this government, arising from the want of a more explicit asserting of the rules given for that end in the holy scriptures ; from which would arise a permanent establishment among ourselves, a good and regular issue in cases subject to ecclesiastical discipline, glory to Christ, our head, and edification to his members ; hath seen fit to ordain and require, and it is by the authority of the same ordained and required, that the ministers of the several counties in this government shall meet together, at their respective county towns, with such messengers, as the churches to which they belong shall see cause to send with them, on the last Monday in June next ; there to consider and agree upon those methods and rules for the management of ecclesiastical discipline, which by them shall be judged agreeable and conformable to the word of God, and shall, at the same meeting, appoint two or more of their number to be their delegates, who shall all meet together at Saybrook, at the next commencement to be held there ; where they shall compare the results of the ministers of the several counties, and out of and from them, to draw a form of ecclesiastical discipline, which, by two or more persons delegated by them, shall be offered to this court, at their session at New-Haven, in October next, to be considered of and confirmed by them : and the expense of the above mentioned meetings shall be defrayed out of the public treasury of this colony.

“ A true copy of the record,

“ Test. ELEAZER KIMBERLY, Secretary.”

¶ “ According to the act of the assembly, the ministers and churches of the several counties convened, at the time

appointed, and made their respective drafts of discipline, and chose their delegates for the general meeting at Saybrook, in September.

“The ministers and messengers chosen for this council, and its result, will appear from their minutes.”

“At a meeting of delegates from the councils of the several counties of Connecticut colony, in New-England, in America, at Saybrook, Sept. 9th, 1708,

PRESENT,

From the council of Hartford county :—The Rev. Timothy Woodbridge, Noadiah Russell, and Stephen Mix. Messenger, John Haynes, Esq.

From the council in Fairfield county :—The Rev. Charles Chauncey and John Davenport. Messenger, deacon Samuel Hoyt.

From the council in New-London county :—The Rev. James Noyes, Thomas Buckingham, Moses Noyes, and John Woodward. Messengers, Robert Chapman, deacon William Parker.

From the council of New-Haven county :—The Rev. Samuel Andrew, James Pierpont, and Samuel Russell.

The Rev. James Noyes and Thomas Buckingham being chosen moderators. The Rev. Stephen Mix and John Woodward being chosen scribes.

In compliance with an order of the general assembly, May 13th, 1708, after humble addresses to the throne of grace for the divine presence, assistance, and blessing upon us, having our eyes upon the word of God and the constitution of our churches, WE agree that the confession of faith owned and assented unto by the elders and messengers assembled at Boston, in New-England, May 12th, 1680, being the second session of that synod, be recommended to the honorable general assembly of this colony, at the next session,

for their public testimony thereunto, as the FAITH of the churches of this colony.\*

We agree also, that the heads of agreement assented to by the united ministers, formerly called presbyterian and congregational, be observed by the churches throughout this colony.†

And for the better regulation of the administration of church discipline, in relation to all cases ecclesiastical, both in particular churches and councils, to the full determining and executing the rules in all such cases, it is agreed,

I. That the elder, or elders of a particular church, with the consent of the brethren of the same, have power, and ought to exercise church discipline, according to the rule of God's word, in relation to all scandals that fall out within the same. And it may be meet, in all cases of difficulty, for the respective pastors of particular churches, to take advice of the elders of the churches in the neighborhood, before they proceed to censure in such cases.

II. That the churches which are neighboring to each other, shall consociate, for mutual affording to each other such assistance as may be requisite, upon all occasions ecclesiastical. And that the particular pastors and churches, within the respective counties in this government, shall be one consociation, (or more, if they shall judge meet,) for the end aforesaid.

III. That all cases of scandal, that fall out within the circuit of any of the aforesaid consociations, shall be brought to a council of the elders, and also messengers of the churches within the said circuit, i. e. the churches of one consociation, if they see cause to send messengers, when there shall be need of a council for the determination of them.

\* The same that is printed in this volume.—*Editor.*

† The heads of agreement here referred to were adopted by the Presbyterians and Congregationalists in England, about the year 1690. They are printed in this volume.—*Editor.*



IV. That, according to the common practice of our churches, nothing shall be deemed an act or judgment of any council, which hath not the act of the major part of the elders present concurring, and such a number of the messengers present, as makes the majority of the council : provided that if any such church shall not see cause to send any messengers to the council, or the persons chosen by them shall not attend, neither of these shall be any obstruction to the proceedings of the council, or invalidate any of their acts.

V. That when any case is orderly brought before any council of the churches, it shall there be heard and determined, which, (unless orderly removed from thence,) shall be a final issue ; and all parties therein concerned shall sit down and be determined thereby. And the council so hearing, and giving the result or final issue, in the said case, as aforesaid, shall see their determination, or judgment, duly executed and attended, in such way or manner, as shall, in their judgment, be most suitable and agreeable to the word of God.

VI. That if any pastor and church doth obstinately refuse a due attendance and conformity to the determination of the council, that hath the cognizance of the case, and determineth it as above, after due patience used, they shall be reputed guilty of scandalous contempt, and dealt with as the rule of God's word in such case doth provide, and the sentence of non-communication shall be declared against such pastor and church. And the churches are to approve of the said sentence, by withdrawing from the communion of the pastor and church, which so refused to be healed.

VII. That, in case any difficulties shall arise in any of the churches in this colony, which cannot be issued without considerable disquiet, that church, in which they arise, (or that minister or member aggrieved with them,) shall apply themselves to the council of the consociated churches of the circuit, to which the said

church belongs; who, if they see cause, shall thereupon convene, hear, and determine such cases of difficulty, unless the matter brought before them, shall be judged so great in the nature of it, or so doubtful in the issue, or of such general concern, that the said council shall judge best that it be referred to a fuller council, consisting of the churches of the other consociation within the same county, (or of the next adjoining consociation of another county, if there be not two consociations in the county where the difficulty ariseth,) who, together with themselves, shall hear, judge, determine, and finally issue such case, according to the word of God.

VIII. That a particular church, in which any difficulty doth arise, may, if they see cause, call a council of the consociated churches of the circuit to which the church belongs, before they proceed to sentence therein; but there is not the same liberty to an offending brother, to call the council, before the church to which he belongs proceed to excommunication in the said case, unless with the consent of the church.

IX. That all the churches of the respective consociations shall choose, if they see cause, one or two members of each church, to represent them in the councils of the said churches, as occasion may call for them, who shall stand in that capacity till new be chosen for the same service, unless any church shall incline to choose their messengers anew, upon the convening of such councils.

X. That the minister or ministers of the county towns, or where there are no ministers in such towns, the two next ministers to the said town, shall, as soon as conveniently may be, appoint time and place for the meeting of the elders and messengers of the churches in said county, in order to their forming themselves into one or more consociations, and notify the time and place to the elders and churches of that county who shall attend at the same, the elders in their persons,

and the churches by their messengers, if they see cause to send them. Which elders and messengers, so assembled in council, as also any other council hereby allowed of, shall have power to adjourn themselves, as need shall be, for the space of one year, after the beginning or first session of the said council, and no longer. And that minister who was chosen at the last session of any council, to be moderator, shall, with the advice and consent of two more elders, (or, in case of the moderator's death, any two elders of the same consociation,) call another council within the circuit, when they shall judge there is need thereof. And all councils may prescribe rules, as occasion may require, and whatever they judge needful within their circuit, for the well performing and orderly managing the several acts, to be attended by them, or matters that come under their cognizance.

XI. That if any person or persons, orderly complained of to a council, or that are witnesses to such complaints, (having regular notification to appear,) shall refuse, or neglect so to do, in the place, and at the time specified in the warning given, except they or he give some satisfying reason thereof to the said council, they shall be judged guilty of scandalous contempt.

XII. That the teaching elders of each county shall be one association, (or more, if they see cause,) which association, or associations, shall assemble twice a year, at least, at such time and place as they shall appoint, to consult the duties of their office, and the common interest of the churches, who shall consider and resolve questions and cases of importance which shall be offered by any among themselves or others; who also shall have power of examining and recommending the candidates of the ministry to the work thereof.

XIII. That the said associated pastors shall take notice of any among themselves, that may be accused of scandal or heresy, unto or cognizable by them, examine the matter carefully, and if they find just

occasion shall direct to the calling of the council, where such offenders shall be duly proceeded against.

XIV. That the associated pastors shall also be consulted by bereaved churches, belonging to their association, and recommend to such churches such persons, as may be fit to be called and settled in the work of the gospel ministry among them. And if such bereaved churches shall not seasonably call and settle a minister among them, the said associated pastors shall lay the state of such bereaved church before the general assembly of this colony, that they may take order concerning them, as shall be found necessary for their peace and edification.

XV. That it be recommended as expedient, that all the associations in this colony do meet in a general association, by their respective delegates, one or more out of each association, once a year, the first meeting to be at Hartford, at the general election next ensuing the date hereof, and so annually in all the counties successively, at such time and place, as they the said delegates shall in their annual meetings appoint."

"The confession of faith, heads of agreement, and these articles of discipline having unanimously passed, and been signed by the scribes, were presented to the legislature the succeeding October, for their approbation and establishment. Upon which they passed the following adopting act :

"At a general court holden at New-Haven, October 1708.

"The reverend ministers, delegates from the elders and messengers of this government, met at Saybrook, September 9th, 1708, having presented to this assembly a Confession of Faith, and Heads of Agreement, and regulations in the administration of church discipline, as unanimously agreed and consented to by the elders and churches in this government; this assembly doth declare their great approbation of such an happy agreement, and do ordain, that all the churches within this government,

that are, or shall be, thus united in doctrine, worship, and discipline, be, and for the future shall be owned, and acknowledged established by law ; provided always, that nothing herein shall be intended or construed to hinder or prevent any society or church, that is or shall be allowed by the laws of this government, who soberly differ or dissent from the united churches hereby established, from exercising worship and discipline, in their own way, according to their consciences.

“ A true copy, Test,

“ ELEAZER KIMBERLY, Secretary.”

“ The Saybrook Platform, thus unanimously recommended by the elders and messengers of the churches, and adopted by the legislature, as the religious constitution of the colony, met with a general reception, though some of the churches were extremely opposed to it.”

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## HEADS OF AGREEMENT.

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The following "heads of agreement" were assented to by the Presbyterians and Congregationalists in England, about the year 1690. Mather, speaking of this event, calls it "*a most happy union*," by which "all former names of distinction are now swallowed up in that blessed one of united brethren." This union was effected in no small degree through the instrumentality of Dr. Increase Mather of Boston, who was at that time on a visit to his christian brethren in England.

## HEADS OF AGREEMENT,

*Assented to by the United Ministers, formerly called Presbyterian and Congregational.*

### I.

Of Churches and Church Members.

1. WE acknowledge our Lord Jesus Christ to have one catholic church, or kingdom, comprehending all that are united to him, whether in heaven or earth. And do conceive the whole multitude of visible believers, and their infant seed (commonly called the catholic visible church) to belong to Christ's spiritual kingdom in this world. But for the notion of a catholic visible church here, as it signifies its having been collected into any formed society, under a visible human head on earth, whether one person singly, or many collectively, we, with the rest of protestants, unanimously disclaim it.

2. We agree, that particular societies of visible saints, who under Christ their head, are statedly joined together, for ordinary communion with one another in all the ordinances of Christ, are particular churches, and are to be owned by each other, as instituted churches of Christ, though differing in apprehensions and practice in some lesser things.

3. That none shall be admitted as members, in order to communion in all the special ordinances of the gospel, but such persons as are knowing, and sound in the fundamental doctrines of the Christian religion, without scandal in their lives ; and to a judgment regulated by the word of God, are persons of visible holiness and honesty ; credibly possessing cordial subjection to Jesus Christ.

4. A great number of such visible saints, (as before described) do become the capable subjects of stated communion in all the special ordinances of Christ upon their mutual declared consent and agreement to walk together therein according to gospel rule. In which declaration, different degrees of explicitness, shall no ways hinder such churches from owning each other, as instituted churches.

5. Though parochial bounds, be not of divine right, yet for common edification, the members of a particular church ought (as much as conveniently may be) to live near one another.

6. That each particular church hath right to use their own officers ; and being furnished with such as are duly qualified and ordained according to the gospel rule, hath authority from Christ for exercising government, and of enjoying all the ordinances of worship within itself.

7. In the administration of church power, it belongs to the pastors and other elders of every particular church, if such there be to rule and govern, and to the brotherhood to consent according to the rule of the gospel.

8. That all professors as before described, are bound in duty, as they have opportunity to join themselves as fixed members of some particular church ; their thus joining being part of their professed subjection to the gospel of Christ, and an instituted means of their establishment and edification ; whereby they are under the pastoral care, and in case of scandalous or offensive walking, may be authoritatively admonished or censured for their recovery, and for vindication of the truth and the church professing it.

9. That a visible professor thus joined to a particular church ought to continue stedfast with the said church ; and not forsake the ministry, and ordinances there dispensed, without an orderly seeking a recommendation unto another church, which ought to be given, when the case of the person apparently requires it.

## II.

### Of the Ministry.

1. WE agree that the ministerial office is instituted by Jesus Christ for the gathering, guiding, edifying and governing of his church ; and continue to the end of the world.

2. They who are called to this office ought to be endued with competent learning and ministerial gifts, as also with the grace of God, sound in judgment, not novices in the faith and knowledge of the gospel ; without scandal, of holy conversation, and such as devote themselves to the work and service thereof.

3. That ordinarily none shall be ordained to the work of this ministry, but such as are called and chosen thereunto by a particular church.

4. That in so great and weighty a matter as the calling and choosing a pastor, we judge it ordinarily requisite, that every such church consult and advise with the pastors of neighboring congregations.

5. That after such advice the person consulted

about, being chosen by the brotherhood of that particular church over which he is to be set, and he accepting, be duly ordained and set apart to his office over them ; wherein it is ordinarily requisite that the pastors of neighboring congregations concur with the preaching elder or elders, if such there be.

6. That whereas such ordination is only intended for such as never before had been ordained to the ministerial office ; if any judge, that in the case also of the removal of one formerly ordained, to a new station, or pastoral charge, there ought to be a like, solemn recommending him and his labors to the grace and blessing of God ; no different sentiments or practice herein, shall be any occasion of contention or breach of communion among us.

7. It is expedient, that they who enter on the work of preaching the gospel, be not only qualified for communion of saints ; but also, that except in cases extraordinary, they give proof of their gifts and fitness for the said work, unto the pastors of churches, of known abilities to discern and judge of their qualifications ; that they may be sent forth with solemn approbation and prayer ; which we judge needful, that no doubt may remain concerning their being called unto the work ; and for preventing (as much as in us lieth) ignorant and rash intruders.

### III.

#### Of Censures.

1. As it cannot be avoided, but that in the purest churches on earth, there will sometimes offences and scandals arise by reason of hypocrisy and prevailing corruption ; so Christ hath made it the duty of every church, to reform itself by spiritual remedies appointed by him to be applied in all such cases, viz. admonition and excommunication.

2. Admonition, being the rebuking of an offending

member in order to conviction, is in case of private offences to be performed according to the rule in Matt. xviii. 15, 16, 17, and in case of public offences openly before the church, as the honor of the gospel, and the nature of the scandal shall require : and, if either of the admonitions take place for the recovery of the fallen person, all further proceedings in a way of censure are thereon to cease, and satisfaction to be declared accordingly.

3. When all due means are used, according to the order of the gospel for the restoring an offending and scandalous brother, and he, notwithstanding remains impenitent, the censure of excommunication is to be proceeded unto ; wherein the pastor and other elders (if there be such) are to lead and go before the church ; and the brotherhood to give their consent in a way of obedience unto Christ, and to the elders, as over them in the Lord.

4. It may sometimes come to pass that a church member, not otherwise scandalous may sinfully withdraw, and divide himself from the communion of the church to which he belongeth : in which case, when all due means for the reducing him, prove ineffectual, he having thereby cut himself off from that church's communion ; the church may justly esteem and declare itself discharged of any further inspection over him.

#### IV.

##### Of communion of Churches.

1. WE agree that particular churches ought not to walk so distinct and separate from each other, as not to have care and tenderness towards one another. But their pastors ought to have frequent meetings together, that by mutual advice, support, encouragement, and brotherly intercourse, they may strengthen the hearts and hands of each other in the ways of the Lord.

2. That none of our particular churches shall be

subordinate to one another, each being endued with equality of power from Jesus Christ. And that none of the said particular churches, their officer or officers, shall exercise any power, or have any superiority, over any other church or their officers.

3. That known members of particular churches constituted as aforesaid, may have occasional communion with one another in the ordinances of the gospel, viz. the word, prayer, sacraments, singing of psalms, dispensed according to the mind of Christ : unless that church, with which they desire communion, hath any just exception against them.

4. That we ought not to admit any one to be a member of our respective congregations, that hath joined himself to another, without endeavors of mutual satisfaction of the congregations concerned.

5. That one church ought not to blame the proceedings of another, until it hath heard, what that church charged, its elders or messengers, can say in vindication of themselves from any charge of irregular or injurious proceedings.

6. That we are most willing and ready to give an account of other church proceedings to each other, when desired ; for preventing or removing any offences, that may arise among us. Likewise we shall be ready to give the right hand of fellowship, and walk together according to the gospel rules of communion of churches.

## V.

### Of Deacons and ruling Elders.

WE agree, the office of a deacon is of divine appointment, and that it belongs to their office to receive, lay out, and distribute the church's stock to its proper uses, by the direction of the pastor, and brethren, if need be. And whereas divers are of opinion, that there is also the office of ruling elders, who labor



not in word and doctrine ; and others think otherwise ; we agree that this difference make no breach among us.

## VI.

Of occasional meeting of Ministers, &c.

1. WE agree that in order to concord, and in other weighty and difficult cases, it is needful and according to the mind of Christ, that the ministers of several churches be consulted and advised with about such matters.

2. That such meetings may consist of smaller or greater numbers, as the matter shall require.

3. That particular churches, their respective elders and members, ought to have a reverential regard to their judgment, so given, and not dissent therefrom without apparent grounds from the word of God.

## VII.

Of our demeanor towards the Civil Magistrate.

1. WE do reckon ourselves obliged continually to pray for God's protection, guidance, and blessing upon the rulers set over us.

2. That we ought to yield unto them not only subjection in the Lord, but support, according to our station and abilities.

3. That if at any time, it shall be their pleasure to call together any number of us, to require an account of our affairs, and the state of our congregations, we shall most readily express all dutiful regard to them herein.

## VIII.

Of a Confession of Faith.

As to what appertains to soundness of judgment in matters of faith, we esteem it sufficient that a church acknowledge the scriptures to be the word of God, the

perfect and only rule of faith and practice, and own either the doctrinal part of those commonly called the articles of the church of England, or the confession or catechisms, shorter or larger compiled by the assembly at Westminster, or the confession agreed on at the Savoy, to be agreeable to the said rule.

## IX.

Of our Duty and Deportment towards them that are not in Communion with us.

1. WE judge it our duty to bear a christian respect to all Christians, according to their several ranks and stations, that are not of our persuasion or communion.

2. As for such as may be ignorant of the principles of the christian religion, or of vicious conversation, we shall in our respective places, as they give opportunity, endeavor to explain to them the doctrine of life and salvation, and to our utmost persuade them to be reconciled to God.

3. That such who appear to have the essential requisites to church communion, we shall willingly receive them in the Lord, not troubling them with disputes about lesser matters.

As we assent to the aforementioned heads of agreement, so we unanimously resolve as the Lord shall enable us to practice according to them.

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